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Edited by

Nirmal Kumar Bose

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PUBLICATIONS

Works
of
Sarat Chandra Roy

1. The Mundas and their Country
(Available with—Asia Publishing House, Contractor Building, Nicol Road, Ballord Estate, Bombay—I)
2. The Oraons of Chota Nagpur
3. Oraon Religion and Custom
(Available with University of Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor-Michigan—48107 U. S. A.)
4. The Kharias, 2 vols.
5. The Birhors
6. The Hill Bhuiyas
7. Caste, Race and Religion in India

A few copies of *The Oraons of Chotanagpur* are available at Rs. 50. *Caste, Race and Religion in India* is also available at Rs. 10.

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MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE ADIVASIS

K. S. SINGH

(*Received on 6 December, 1969*)

Abstract : In this paper the author has tried to describe the development of Gandhiji's ideas on the tribal question. He also compares them with the ideas of Amritlal Thakkar and Verrier Elwin, and shows how these stood in relation to one another.

MAHATMA Gandhi's pre-occupation was with the development of a technique of social action based on non-violence (*satyagraha*). He took up only a few major issues, such as national freedom, untouchability, communal unity and rural reconstruction and sought to develop through the implementation of the programmes revolving round them the people's collective will, *lok shakti*, as the supreme solvent of social ills. The Adivasi problem, as such, did not claim his attention until the early 1940s, but he exercised the imagination of the tribal people, as of other segments of the rural community, and his life and mission became known through the Adivasi welfare programmes implemented by a number of organizations. A number of social movements among the tribes were influenced by him. Two key figures, Amritlal Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa, and Verrier Elwin, who shaped free India's tribal policy, came in close contact with

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him. Thakkar Bapa was a life-long collaborator, and he in a way influenced the Mahatma's interest in the tribal problem.

In the 1930s the Mahatma was exercised over the problem of untouchability; his chief concern was the welfare of the Harijans, 'God's chosen', who constituted a sizeable section of the Hindu community, numbering about five crores (1931 Census). The tribals, in contrast, were about half the number of the Harijans (2.24 crores), a bare $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the total population. More importantly, Harijans had been victims of discrimination and labelled as untouchables. Not so the tribals. In consonance with this line of thinking, he reminded Thakkar Bapa,¹ who was pre-occupied with the tribal problems, of the Hindus' duty towards the Harijans rather than the tribals, and persuaded him to accept the secretaryship of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

'There is no limit to your greed. By all means satisfy it to the top of your bent. Your secretaryship surely is no hindrance... You can give as much of your time as you like to the Adivasis while discharging your duty as Secretary of the Sangh. You do not want to tell me that you want to resign even after that latitude... But the eradication of the sin of untouchability calls for the moral force of the pure in heart. Do not forget that the irreligion of untouchability is to-day being sanctioned as religion. *That is not so in the case of Adivasis* (italics mine). I do not mind therefore your dedicating yourself to the service of the Adivasis, but it must not be at the cost of the Harijans'.²

Bapa yielded to the Mahatma's advice. He would, however, often yearn to go back to his first love, the tribals. Gandhiji, who did not 'depreciate the service of the Adivasis' but thought that the 'service of the Harijans must have the first claim on the Hindus', reminded him :

'Our ancestors have sinned grievously by putting Harijans virtually out of the pale of Hindu society. It is our sacred duty to give them once again an honoured place amongst ourselves. The work is nothing less than that of reforming the current Hindu religion. No, Thakkar, while you and I live, that must be our primary duty.

Everything else must come after, however important it may be in itself. All you can do is to leave a large part of the actual work to your colleagues and confining yourself to general supervision, give as much time to the Adivasis as you can spare, but the responsibility for the Harijan Sevak Sangh will lie on you. Neither of us can divorce ourselves from that work'.³

The Mahatma was sensitive to the social and moral aspects of conversion among the illiterate rural masses, including the tribals. He believed that there was no such thing as conversion from one faith to another. Religion was a personal matter between an individual and his God :

'It is a conviction daily growing upon me that the great and rich Christian Missionaries will render true service to India if they confine their activities to humanitarian service without the ulterior motive of converting India, or at least her unsophisticated villagers, to Christianity, and destroying their social superstructure, which notwithstanding many defects has stood now from time immemorial the onslaught upon it from within and from without.... Every living faith must have within itself the power of rejuvenation, if it is to live'.⁴

There was no point in the missionaries weaning away the tribals from their animistic faith and superstitions ; they should be allowed to develop according to their laws and compulsions. C. F. Andrews, on the other hand, justified proselytization as a means of conferring freedom from primitive terrors and savageries on tribes. He wrote to Elwin, a supporter of Gandhiji's views on conversion :

'And I cannot at all agree with Bapu that most forms of "religion" which are really evil in their essence, are not to be conditioned, and those who practise them are not to be converted. I believe in South India the devil worship is absolutely hideous in some of its forms and utterly unworthy of man made in the image of God'.⁵

And he warned Elwin :

'Have you not gone too far in following Bapu about "conversion" ? I fully accept that these hill tribes must be

freed from the suspicion and fear that you must have some ulterior motive. But the joy which we have in our own hearts owing to the love of Christ must find its expression, because it is the one motive power in our own lives. Bapu would seem to suggest that even to wish in one's own heart to give to another that joy, which has been the strength and stay of one's own life, is itself wrong'.⁶

Andrews was perhaps as logical as Gandhi, but to the latter the right of the individual to shape his destiny according to his own will and judgement was an article of faith. Gandhiji, however, admired the missionary spirit. Speaking in the vastly different context of what one could do with the tribal people of the North-West, he said in 1946 :

'I would accept a challenge of conquering tribal areas, but as a non-violent man I would not bribe them nor kill them : I would serve them. Have not the missionaries allowed themselves to be eaten by cannibals ?'⁷

In contrast, he commented upon the Congress's fitness to rule in the late thirties, and asked wryly :

'Why have the Congressmen been unable to reach these tribes (criminal tribes) and make them proof against the blandishments of those who would exploit their traditional violent tendencies, so-called or real ?'⁸

In the early forties, Gandhiji showed awareness of the tribal problem, and he was the first and foremost of the national leaders to have done so. The tomes of Congress resolution did not contain a word about the tribal issue ; probably there was no attempt to identify the issues in the times of the all-consuming struggle for independence, or the tribal issue was considered a minor part of the wider social and economic challenge.

In December 1941, Gandhiji drew up the 13-point reconstruction programme. In January 1942, it was enlarged to include tribal welfare as the fourteenth item, reportedly at the instance of Thakkar Bapa. But Gandhi was no less within it ; for in the meanwhile, he had come to realize that tribals were materially no better than the Harijans, that the former constituted a sizeable segment of the population, and

that the danger of their neglect and de-nationalization was real. This was a departure from his old point of view :

'The Adivasis are the original inhabitants whose material position is perhaps no better than that of the Harijans and who have been long victims of neglect on the part of the so-called high classes. The Adivasis should have found a special place in the constructive programme. Non-mention was an oversight... The Christian missionaries have been more or less in the sole occupation of the field. Great as his labour has been it has not prospered as it might have because of his ultimate aim being the Adivasis' conversion to his fold and thus becoming de-Indianised. Anyway, no one who hopes to construct *Swaraj* on the foundation of non-violence, can afford to neglect even the least of India's sons. Adivasis are too numerous to be counted among the least.'

Soon followed the most disarming admission to have come from the foremost national leader, and in a vein so characteristic of him, a stress was laid on the independence of the various elements in the composite national life, and on the unity of all sections and all the communities of this vast land of ours.

'Adivasis have become the fourteenth item in the constructive programme. But they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races are so varied that the best of us, in spite of every effort, cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one comes upon layer after layer of things, one ought to know as a national servant, one nation whose every unit has a living consciousness of being one with one another.'

Nothing hurt the nationalist in Gandhi more than the segregation of the various communities, particularly the tribals, under the dangerous spell of the policy of the 'isolation and status quo'. The Act of 1935, he recalled, separated tribals from the rest of the inhabitants. The Excluded Areas were placed under the Government's direct administration ; the Adivasis were put into water-tight compartments

and classified as tribal people by the Government. 'It was a shame', he told social workers, 'that they had allowed them to be treated like that. It was up to them to make the Adivasis feel one with them'.¹¹ In strategically situated Assam, in 1946, he reminded the people that 'it was their shame, that the Adivasis should be isolated from the rest of the nation of which they were an inalienable part'. Assam was a vast field for the constructive programme, which could serve as an effective instrument for bringing the tribals into the national fold. If a social worker was 'prevented from rendering silent service to the Adivasis, he should prefer to go to prison because prison-going would ever in itself advance their cause'¹². In fact, prison-going for a worker engaged in the service of the Adivasis would be a 'most auspicious beginning for his work'; this would 'enshrine him in their hearts.'¹³

Impact on Tribal Movements

Though the Mahatma's interest in the tribal problem crystallized at a late stage in his life, his influence on tribal movements was revealing. In the course of his itineraries through the length and breadth of the country, he came in contact with the tribes and spoke to them in a language that was familiar to them. In September 1925, he passed through the tribal regions of Bihar, made the first acquaintance of the Hos at Chaibasa and the Mundas at Khunti (Ranchi); he was impressed with the colony of the *Bhakats* (Tana and Birsait Bhagats) who believed in *khaddar* and nearly four hundred of them plied their *charkas* most assiduously and sang their *bhajans* in a chorus.¹⁴ The spinning wheel had preceded the Mahatma. This was repeated seventeen years later at the Ramgarh Congress (1941). The visit made a profound impression on social movements among the Chotanagpur tribes.

It would be pertinent at this point to recall in brief the development of the tribal *bhagat* movements (Bhagatism). A few of these movements arose in the later medieval period under the impact of the Hindu *bhakti* movements spearheaded by Chaitanya who had passed through Jharkhand and by

Kabir. In the wake of the growing contacts with Vaishnavism and socio-reform movements among the tribes, many *bhagat* cults came into existence, particularly among the Oroans, Santals, Mundas and Bhils. The Bhagats attacked spirits and witchcraft, preached devotion to a personal God (often a Hindu deity), enjoined observance of cleanliness and laid down a new code of moral conduct. In this sense tribal 'bhagatism' served as a bridge between the tribal and non-tribal Hindu societies.

To the Hindu peasantry steeped in the medieval *bhakti* tradition, the Mahatma appeared like a *bhakti* preacher, and to the tribals like a *bhagat*. He spoke in predominantly *bhakti* idioms of *Ram Rajya*, of the efficacy *Ramnama*, of the service of the *Daridranarayan* (God in the shape of the poor) at his evening prayer meetings. Did he not also speak, a tribal *bhagat* would nod approvingly, of temperance, purity and on a personal God, as one of their own *bhagat* leaders (cf. Birsa Munda to the Mundas)? But the Mahatma also spoke of something more, of independence and freedom (*swaraj*), of a new order, of a new moral idiom. So new dimensions were added to tribal movements (see Appendix A).

We may describe in brief three movements, the Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraons, the Hari Baba movement among the Hos and allied tribes, and the Rajmohini movement among the Gonds, which reflected the impact of Gandhi.

The Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraons started as a reformatory movement after the first world war, but it assumed a political overtone when it came in contact with the Congress movement in Chotanagpur. To traditional *bhagat* idioms of purity, temperance and teetotalism were added *swaraj*, Gandhi *Raj*, non-payment of taxes, *ahimsa*, etc. The tribals seized upon these idioms to express their agrarian 'hunger'. The Tana Bhagats refused to pay land tax, because Gandhi *Raj* had arrived and the land belonged to them. They lost in consequence their land, but they remained, above twenty thousand of them or so—a small fraction of the Oraon community—a solid phalanx of the followers of the Congress and Gandhi, in the most unfavourable circumstances, pitted

against the missionaries and the establishment. Large numbers of them courted imprisonment, trekked distances to attend the sessions of the Congress held in different parts of the country, propagated the message of the spinning-wheel and the National Flag, all the while hoping that when *swaraj* would come, they would not pay rent, would get back all the land they now lost to the aliens, a familiar cry of the Sardar Movement among the tribes in the 19th century.

The reaction to Gandhiji's Chotanagpur tour in 1925 among the Mundas who saw a similarity between their own Birsa and the Mahatma was understandable. A Santal leader in 1928-29 in Hazaribagh proclaimed himself as a disciple of Gandhi, exhorted his people to eschew meat and drink and wear the sacred thread like the Hindus. He declared that Gandhi *Raj* would replace British *Raj* and that Gandhi *Raj* would bring ease and comfort and that the bullets of the Government soldiers would become harmless like water. The Santals refused to pay the *chowkidari* tax, and displayed the Congress flag. The Mahatma crept into the *bhagat's* rituals. Some practised a secret ceremony; the father in the family would collect some rice and a few pice, make them into three packets for Gandhi, Durga and Kali, leave the packet for a short while by the side of a tank, throw Gandhi's packet into water and pick up the remaining two. No explanation of this queer practice, which was officially reported, was available.¹⁵

Among the Hos, one Duka Ho, called Hari Baba in 1930, proclaimed himself as one of the 'most intimate disciples of Gandhi'. The reign of Gandhi had arrived, his message ran, and this was to be celebrated with dance and feasts and by words 'The British are no more: Victory to Gandhi Mahto (*Angrezi Bahadur nov; Gandhi Mahto ki jai*)'. The movement grew into a gigantic operation against village spirits and witchcraft before it subsided with the arrest of Hari Baba and his colleagues.¹⁶

A *bhagat* movement developed among the Gonds of Surguja after the Mahatma's death. In 1951, Rajmohini a Gond woman, driven to the extremity of hunger in a famine year,

went out to collect roots and tubers for her starving family. Exhausted, she lay unconscious. According to one of the versions put out by the workers of the Bapa Dharam Sabha Adivasi Seva Mandal, she had a vision of Mahatma Gandhi. Returning home she went on a fast for twenty-one days. Her prayer was granted, rain fell, peace and prosperity returned to her people. She turned a preacher. She called upon her people, in true *bhagat* tradition, to give up eating meat and telling lies and to follow the path of truth.¹⁷

Among the Bhils of the Panchmahal a similar trend could be observed :

Do you know what Gandhi tells you,
Give up liquor, eating meat, stealing, rioting,
Spin the *charka* ;
Let every house echo with the sound of the
 spinning wheel
Thakkar Bapa says, educate your children
Give up your false deities, and worship Ram,
 the true God
[A *Bhil bhajan* - Thakkar Bapa (Hindi) 1955].

Impact through Adivasi Welfare Programmes

From the early twenties a number of organizations for the welfare of the tribal people came into existence. Though they did not owe their origin to Gandhi, they were modelled on the rural reconstruction programme that Gandhi had drawn up. The Bhil Seva Mandal (1922) was organized by Thakkar Bapa in the wake of the famine in the Panchmahal to promote the welfare of the Bhils through education imparted from a network of residential schools (*ashramas*), debt relief, eradication of drinking habits and inculcating cleanliness and purity in life. In the process, the Bhils came closer to Hindu Vaishnavism. In the thirties, Shakti Ashram in Assam (1931) and Barama Ashram (1936) were founded. In the forties, a number of organizations were formed on the model of the Bhil Seva Mandal: Andhra Sramik Dharma Rajya Sabha (1942); Vanayasi Seva Mandal, Mandla (1944); Adivasi Seva

Mandal, Tohana ; Adimjati Seva Mandal (1944), Santals and Paharia Seva Mandal (1942), etc. The apex organization, Bharatiya Adimjati Seva Sangh was established by Thakkar Bapa in 1948 to promote (a) social, economic and educational advancement of the tribal communities, including nomadic and de-notified tribes to enable them to take their legitimate place in the national life of the country as equal citizens ; and (b) co-ordinate the activities of bodies engaged in similar activities. The body is non-political, and it does not engage itself in any proselytizing activities.

These organizations—they have proliferated since independence—have a multi-pronged programme for the welfare of the tribes : (i) education through Ashram schools assisted by the grant of stipends ; (ii) medical relief through Ayurvedic dispensaries ; (iii) village and cottage industries ; (iv) promotion of khadi and spinning ; (v) debt-relief, and (vi) forest co-operative societies. Items (iii) and (iv) were taken from Gandhiji's reconstruction programme, as was the philosophy and the context. These centres projected powerfully the image of Gandhi as *Disum Aba* (Father of the Nation) and brought a sizeable section of the tribals, apart from the *bhagat*, into the mainstream of the national movement. These organizations became the channels for communication of ideas of nationalism and freedom to the tribal people. A nationalist perspective on tribal problems emerged in contra-distinction to the isolationist standpoint of the missionaries and the officials. In the course of time, the approach of these organizations came to be identified too closely with the stance of a political party, and this together with other constraints handicapped their secular development to some extent.

Development of Tribal Perspective

We may now turn to the interaction of the three distinct standpoints concerning tribals, the 'isolationist', 'assimilationist' and the 'integrationist', the latter two viewpoints represented by Thakkar Bapa and Verrier Elwin who influenced the formulation of free India's tribal policy. While Gandhiji's own view could not be placed in either of the cate-

gories mentioned above, he implicitly recognized the individuality of the tribals, 'not the least of India's sons', and probably the need for their protection against denationalization. While Bapa and Elwin came in close contact with him, they developed independently, out of their experiences, their philosophy and programme for tribes. It will, therefore, be pertinent to deal at some length with the viewpoints of Thakkar Bapa and Verrier Elwin and their development in interaction to Gandhiji's.

Gandhi and Bapa

Gandhiji admired Thakkar Bapa's dedication to the tribal cause :

'If we are to regard the tribesmen and the aborigines as our fellow beings, this can only be done by observing Thakkar Bapa's mode of life. It has always been his inordinate ambition to mingle with the needy and the distressed and the moment he is away from them he feels distressed.'¹⁸

While Thakkar Bapa's heart lay with the Mahatma, his head was with the Servants of India Society, from whose ranks he rose. Though a conscience-keeper of Gandhi, he disagreed with the latter's assessment of the relative merit of the Harijan and tribal positions, and continued to highlight with his characteristic humility and clarity the hardships of the latter, which he thought were worse than those of the former. This could be explained in the background of his life, his life-long service of the tribals and his first-hand experience of their problems.

Amritlal Thakkar joined the Servants of India Society in 1914. A terrible famine that broke out in the Panchmahal region populated by the Bhils saw him organize his first relief work. He fell in love with the people—it was love at first sight—and since then the Bhils held 'primacy of place in his heart', and aroused his 'tenderest concern and foremost love'.¹⁹ Another famine afflicted the object of his love in 1922, and he founded the Bhil Seva Mandal in 1923, the forerunner of the Adivasi welfare organizations to be launched from a nationalist platform.

He conducted many enquiries into the social and economic condition of the tribal people. In 1925 he spent about six months investigating problem of tribals of Central Provinces, Assam and Chotanagpur. He stayed mainly in the Bhil area till 1932, when Gandhiji asked him to shoulder higher responsibility regarding Harijan welfare. With the assumption of the office by the Congress Party in some States, he was called upon to draw up a programme for the welfare of the tribals. In 1939, he toured the tribal States of Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces and Assam extensively, drew up schemes for uplift of Adivasis/Harijan communities and conducted enquiries into their condition. He also organized welfare work among the Bhils in Khandesh. In October 1940, he became a member of the Aboriginal Welfare Board which was set up in Bihar. When the Interim Government took over, he prepared a five-year Adivasis Welfare Plan for Bihar and Central Province. He was appointed a member of the Advisory Sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly formed to enquire into and report on the political, economic and social set-up to be accorded to the hill-people of Assam.

In 1941, he summed up his analysis of tribal problems in the Kale Memorial Lecture,³⁰ which he categorized into (i) poverty, (ii) illiteracy, (iii) ill-health, (iv) inaccessibility of the areas inhabited by the tribals, (v) defects in administration, and (vi) lack of leadership. The Adivasis were the poorest section of the Indian population, not excepting the Harijans.³¹ The Harijans, for all the disabilities and discrimination they suffered, always 'lived with us' and became 'part and parcel of our town and village life'. In contrast, we 'hardly felt' the existence of our aborigines. The 'Kali Praja', the dark people, were held in contempt; they were neglected for ages; they laboured under very hard primitive conditions of life, waging an unequal fight against disease and exploitation by the advanced sections of our people.

Secondly, nobody except the missionaries, least of all Hindus, took care of them; it was the love and affection of Christians that attracted him :

'True, we Hindus rarely show that love and sympathy

to the distressed and semi-wild people of our country, which we human beings should show to one another. On the other hand we shun them and even hate them as if they were not creatures of God with the same feelings and passions as ourselves. Whose fault is it if such people find consideration, love and happiness amongst people of another religion, and so embrace it ?²²

Thirdly, tribals enjoyed far less protection and were much less organized than the Scheduled Castes. While the Scheduled Castes enjoyed representation in proportion to their population under the Act of 1935, the Scheduled Tribes had only a 'bare modicum of representation'. (Only 24 ; Assam 9 ; Bihar 7 ; Orissa 5 ; and Bombay, Madras, C. P. one in each of the three.²³) In C. P. where the aboriginal population was very nearly equal to the Harijan population, and one-fifth of the total population, only one seat was reserved for the aborigines against twenty for Harijans. In Local Boards hardly any representation had been given, except by the Bombay Government. In Orissa, out of the five seats reserved, four were filled up by nomination ; nomination to Provincial Legislatures had been discarded in all other Provinces.²⁴

Fourthly, the Scheduled Tribes required a longer period of reservation—beyond ten years—than the Scheduled Castes, because the former were not organized.

'They live on the hills and in the jungles, and are even more backward than the Scheduled Castes. They are far less organised... The Scheduled Castes have had a lead over them for the Scheduled Tribes for as long a period as the Scheduled Castes will enjoy it, viz. for 25 years'.²⁵

Fifthly, there was no leadership.

'Lack of leadership in the Tribal communities is a great handicap. Amongst the Christianised aborigines, e. g. of Chota Nagpur, there are a few educated people, but they generally seem to be interested chiefly in Christian aborigines than in their non-Christian brethren. Amongst the latter, leaders are fewer still. This is one of the reasons why aboriginal interests fail to receive proper attention from the authorities and from the general public'.²⁶

Bapa joined issue with the isolationist school of policy-makers which comprised 'anthropologists and British members of the I. C. S. and other Government officers'. The isolationists, according to him, believed in 'keeping the aborigines in their areas, untouched by the civilisation of the plains' because they feared that contact with the Hindus of the plains would (i) break the solidarity of the tribal society ; (ii) spread the contagion of social evils such as untouchability, early marriage and purdah into tribal areas ; (iii) expose the tribals to the temptation of imitating only the lower strata of the Hindu community of the plains ; (iv) bring about demoralisation and pose danger of being eventually contained as another depressed community. Dr. Hutton the arch-exponent of this school wrote :

'The opening up of the communications involving contact at many points and often practical settlement of tribal country, alters the aspect of any agricultural changes that may have been taking place. Generally speaking it substitutes conflict for contact—not necessarily a conflict of arms, but of cultures and of material interests. Attempts to develop minerals, forests or land for intensive cultivation can only be made at the expense of the tribe whose isolation is thus invaded. Again, the exploitation of minerals not only involves the tribal land but generally the introduction of an alien population, usually of an extremely mixed character and not infrequently exceptionally dissolute.'²⁷

'Education in itself is a doubtful blessing in so far as it is apt to unfit them (aborigines) for environment, but it is probably a necessary weapon of defence for them in the circumstances in which they are placed, perhaps the only one of any permanent value, though the real solution of the problem would appear to be to create self-governing tribal areas with free power to self-determination in regard to sovereignty or adjacent provincial units.'²⁸

Thakkar Bapa protested against the effort to isolate the tribals from the 'Hindus'. 'To keep these people confined to and isolated in their inaccessible hills and jungles was like

keeping them in glass cases of a museum for the curiosity of purely academic persons'. He, however, reiterated that 'safeguards must be instituted to protect the aborigines from exploitation by the more advanced people of the plains, as had been done with regard to non-alienation of land.'

He argued :

'But how can the aborigines realise their present backwardness and work for their own economic, social and political progress if there is no contact with people more advanced than ourselves? When contact is advocated, I do not for a moment suggest that large populations of the plains should be transplanted to aboriginal regions and made to live amidst and dominate the Adivasis. Also, I do not discountenance the need for protection of aboriginal interests against any possible exploitation by some sections of the advanced people of the plains. What I mean to say is that a healthy comradeship should develop between the aborigines and the non-aborigines and each should profit culturally from the other and in course of time work hand in hand for the welfare of India as a whole. I am one of those who strongly advocate reservation of seats, but in a general electorate, for the Adivasis in the legislatures and Local Boards for some time to come. All the same, I feel that there is no cause for getting alarmed over imaginary evils resulting out of the contact with non-aborigines and their civilisation harply reacting to creation of self-governing tribal areas.'

He pleaded for unity and 'assimilation' :

'In fact, it is unjust and wrong to call the indigenous social workers "interventionists". It would be proper to call them advocates of the policy of assimilation. The aborigines should form part of the civilised communities of our country, not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this region or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general, social and political life of the country. Separation and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and

they strike at the root of national solidarity. We have already enough communal troubles and should we add to them instead of extinguishing the existing ones and seeing that we are all one and indivisible? Safety lies in union and not in isolation. Nationalists cannot but view with concern and regret statements like the following one from Dr Hutton.²⁹

Energetically repudiating the charge that indigenous social workers and nationalist politicians, the 'interventionists', approached the aborigines with the feelings of a morally and socially superior person and brought with them social evils and taboo with regard to food (such as beef-eating), he reminded that these evils were dying in the plains and there was no likelihood of their being carried to the aboriginal society. Care should be taken that contagion of social evils like untouchability did not spread into aboriginal areas. He reminded the isolationists of their perfect silence over and non-objection to 'Christian missionaries' close and uncontrolled contact with tribals, introduction of the Roman script for tribal dialects, spread of Christian propaganda, migration of thousands of tribals to tea-gardens from their natural surroundings on low wages.'

He appreciated the Salvationist and other missionaries' good work, and modelled his own organization and programme on theirs, but he sharply differed from them in other matters. He pleaded for greater protection and for making available safeguards under the Indian Constitution for non-Christian aborigines, because there was none to look after them in the Constituent Assembly. The representatives of Christian tribals charged him with seeking to bring about a division among the tribes, between Christians and non-Christians. He also felt that the aboriginal children should be taught through the medium of provincial languages and in their script through the medium of tribal dialect in lower classes. Introduction of the Roman script for Khasi language should be discouraged because it presented innumerable complexities and estranged the feelings of the major communities, besides having many technical disadvantages.

On economic issues, he was for a scientific and rational solution. He disagreed with Verrier Elwin, the incorrigible romanticist, who favoured continuance of the *Jhum* (slash-and-burn cultivation) with some alterations and restrictions because it was almost a religious necessity for some of the tribals. 'The argument' that some tribals did not 'plough the land because they considered it a sin to lacerate the womb of *Dhartimata*', could not justify the practice any longer. In 1945, he protested against the plan of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar under which all communities except aborigines were to get proportionate representation ; this amounted to political disenfranchisement of the tribals, on the ground that they did not possess the political capacity to exercise political powers for their own good. Bapa reminded people that there were 112 Adivasis graduates.⁸⁰

Thakkar Bapa thus built up the nationalist perspective on the tribal question. In doing so, he was sharply critical of the official and missionary efforts to isolate the tribals from the mainstream of national life. But the choice of the phrase 'assimilation' was unhappy, because Bapa did not advocate complete absorption of the tribals at the cost of their individuality. The formulation of the concept of assimilation in contradistinction to that of isolation and separatism was liable to be misunderstood, as it was.

Gandhi and Elwin

Before Verrier Elwin took up his work among the tribals, he was involved for a brief spell from 1928 to 1932 with the national movement and came close to Gandhiji :

'Son you have become of your own choice. I have accepted the responsible position. And son you shall remain to the end of time'.⁸¹

This was not to be ! Elwin who was enamoured of working among the untouchables in Gujarat was advised by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Jamnalal Bajaj to leave the Harijans alone and establish himself among the Adivasis. Reflecting the thinking in the nationalist circles, the Sardar said :

'The untouchables are not your problem. They are

the sin of the Hindus, and it is the Hindus who must make reparations to them.'⁸³

Elwin saw no contradiction in Christians associating themselves with the freedom movement under the stewardship of Gandhi without losing distinctiveness of their own religion.⁸⁴ After 'long discussion and much good advice from Gandhi', he resigned from the Christa Seva Sangh, and took a 'plunge in the dark'. In the company of Thakkar Bapa, 'the most prominent of the social workers of his day', he toured the Bhil area, and decided to settle down among the Gonds at Karanjia. To this phase belonged some of his writings in which he sought to establish that it was the right and duty of the Christians to overthrow a foreign or despotic government ;⁸⁵ in a similar vein he praised khadi to the skies.⁸⁶

Elwin's honeymoon with the national movement came to an unhappy end in 1932, when he offered, in return for the passage to India, to 'confine himself' entirely to his work among the Gonds and to take no part in the civil disobedience and any other political movement.⁸⁷ Gandhi called him '*naram*' (soft, gentle, yielding), and added that 'these adjectives could be applied to you in certain circumstances'. He, however, consoled him : 'It is enough for me to know, as I do know, that you regard no sacrifice too great for the pursuit of truth'.⁸⁸ In response to a letter from Elwin, the Mahatma further consoled him thus, : 'God has saved you for greater service..... You must cheer up. No room for idle sorrow'.⁸⁹

However, from 1932 onwards, and particularly in the forties, when the Mahatma reached the pinnacle of his career, Elwin's link with him weakened, 'though his affection for him never wavered'. From an enthusiast of the khadi programme, he turned into its critic. In July 1937, he wrote to Gandhi that the utility of spinning for Gonds or other tribes was questionable ; in areas where cotton did not grow spinning seemed artificial and uneconomic. Secondly, the Mahatma's view on prohibition was damaging to the tribals. Thirdly, his philosophy of sex-relation and his excessive emphasis on diet, jarred on tribal susceptibilities. These were only minor points, and yet these led Elwin to 'deprive himself of the warmth of

his affection and strength, when he reached his highest stature during his later years, but it was a feeling about Truth that kept me from going to see him'.³⁹

Yet there were two points on which Elwin's standpoint coincided with Gandhi's. The first was his view that Christianity and British imperialism were not convertible terms ; this was against the view of the Establishment that Christianity should have nothing to do with the policies of the Congress and Gandhi, and deviation from this would amount to treachery to Christ and the Emperor.⁴⁰ The second was the attitude to conversion which has been mentioned earlier. It could also be partly explained by the influence of mystical literature on Elwin, which made him look at religion not 'as a matter of saving of your and other's soul'—in times of famine many missionaries at one time undoubtedly took advantage of people's hunger to change their religion—but as a quest for spiritual reality.⁴¹ This attitude was also strengthened by his experience in Gandhiji's Ashram 'which made it impossible to believe in an exclusive form of Christianity,' and once exclusiveness was taken out of Christianity or for that matter any religion, a great deal goes out of it.⁴² In the forties, his views on conversion became stridently polemical. In a paper on '*the foreign missionary danger*' (1944), he highlighted (1) the rapid pace of conversion of tribes and the danger of the conversion within a few years of the entire aboriginal population into a querulous, anti-national, aggressive, minority community, with none of the old virtues and few of the new, which will be a thorn in the side of the future Government of India'; and he advocated (2) the prohibition of proselytization as in many other free countries.'⁴³

'Change of religion is actually harmful to the aborigines. It destroys tribal unity, strips the people of age-long moral sanctions, separates them from the mass of their fellow countrymen and in many cases leads to decadence that is as pathetic as it is deplorable, the methods employed are questionable. There is economic exploitation, exploitation of ignorance and social exploitation. Therefore missionaries should be withdrawn from tribal areas'.⁴⁴

About the place of the tribes in Indian society, Elwin indignantly denied having been an isolationist ; he affirmed that he had condemned the policy of isolation. But the confusion arose out of the inept phrase, 'the National Park', that he coined in the late thirties to underline the need for protection of the tribes against exploitation, and the preservation of the three freedoms for them : freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from interference. The fact of the exploitation of tribals by money-lenders, corrupt and rapacious officials and oppressive landlords could not be denied. He admitted later that when he spoke in terms of preserving tribal culture, he thought a little statically. Later he thought in a less static way⁴⁵ and spoke about the unity of the hills and plains as essential to the general national interest. The concept of integration stressed the need for maintaining 'cultural identity' of tribals in the wider context of national unity, territorial integrity and socialistic goals. Elwin edged closer to the nationalist school in this sense : 'The special care and protection given to the tribesmen must not cast shadow on the unity of India. They must be educated to feel that they are full citizens of the Republic, with real rights and still more urgent duties.' Before independence, through his writings, he made 'dominant social groups' conscious of the tribal problem in the national perspective ; in this sense he he was a guru—as Jawaharlal Nehru called him—to him and others. After independence, he contributed to the development of secular and integrated tribal policy for all its drawbacks.⁴⁶

Conclusion

We have sought to trace the development of Gandhi's impact on the tribals and the tribal perspective. In the Gandhian conspectus, the tribal problem occupied a very small space. The extracts quoted above are about all that Gandhi had to say about the tribes and the issues that bore upon them. For a long time the Harijan problem, for social and political reasons, put the tribal issue in the shade ; later when the facts came to be known the two were equated. This in itself was a

development of great significance. The inclusion of tribal welfare in the reconstruction programme implied recognition of the primacy of putting the tribal problem in perspective for solution. A queer result of Gandhiji's impact was the emphasis that the archaic *bhagat* element in tribal social movements received ; but his influence also helped to add new and wide perspectives to them, and bring a section of the tribes into the mainstream of national life. Also interesting was the interaction of different standpoints on tribals, and the emergence of a perspective and philosophy of tribal reconstruction with its nationalist, secular and integrated orientation. The tribal welfare programme, which projected his image and message, did not attempt a basic re-structuring of tribal agrarian economy to provide the base for economic development. The significance of Gandhi's later-day radicalism in agrarian matters was missed by the architects of the nationalist or assimilationist approach to tribal issues. Verrier Elwin allowed trivialities to deepen his differences with Gandhi. The relevance of Gandhi's message to the reconstruction of the tribal polity was not seriously explored and pursued in his day or even our own.

Appendix

GANDHI IN TRIBAL FOLKLORE

The Spinning Wheel and Swaraj

- (i) *Bhajan* (Sadani)
 Dutu kati kati ke swaraj lele Baba,
 Swaraj lele Baba.
 Kori Korke swaraj lele Baba,
 Swaraj lele Baba.
 Baro joti jotike swaraj lele Baba,
 Swaraj lele Baba,
 Kapas boi boi ke swaraj lele Baba,
 Swaraj lele.
 Kapas oti oti ke swaraj lele Baba,
 Birsa Bhagwan swaraj lele,
 Rua dhuni dhuni Baba swaraj lele,
 Charkha kati kati ke swaraj lele.

O Father, by clearing the jungle, you won swaraj.
 O Father, you got it.
 O Father, by digging (the earth) you won swaraj,
 O Father, you got it.
 O Father, by ploughing (the field) you won swaraj,
 O Father, you got it.
 O Father, by sowing cotton seeds you won swaraj,
 O Father, you got it.
 O Father, by sowing cotton seeds you won swaraj,
 You got it.
 O Father, by ginning cotton from seeds you won
swaraj,
 O Father, by combing cotton wool you won swaraj,
 You got it.
 O Father, by spinning the working wheel, you won
swaraj:

(ii) *Bhajan* (Mundari)
 Charka biur biur-te,
 Swarajem agukeda,
 Gandhim agukeda.
 Sutam takui takute,
 Swarajem agukeda,
 Gandhim agukeda.
 Ulgulan kete,
 Chotanagpurem agukeda,
 Birisam agukeda.

By working the spinning wheel,
 You got swaraj,
 O, Gandhi, you got it.
 By spinning cotton,
 You got swaraj,
 O Gandhi, you got it.
 By causing a tumult,
 You got Chotanagpur,
 O Birsa, you got it.

(iii) *Bhajan*
 Nimin din Gandhi takliph janae,
 Gandhi takliphjanae,

Chotanagpur me swaraj lele Gandhi,
 Swaraj lele Gandhi,
 Bhakti bhai sange Gandhi swaraj lele,
 Swaraj lele.
 Gandhi suffered so long !
 Gandhi suffered.
 O Gandhi, you got swaraj for Chotanagpur.
 Gandhi got swaraj.
 With Bhagats (behind him) Gandhi got swaraj,
 He got swaraj.

(iv) *Bhajan*

Singi turoleka numa Gandhi doe janamlan.
 Chandu turoleka numa Birisa doe uparlen.
 Swaraj natin numa Gandhi doe janamlan,
 Mundako bird natin numa Birisa doe uparlen.
 O Mother, like the rising Sun Gandhi was born,
 O Mother, like the rising Moon Birsa had come up.
 O Mother, Gandhi was born for swaraj.
 O Mother, Birsa had come up to put the Mundas on
 their feet.

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'Elwin contributed to one of the the fundamental ideals of modern India the development of Indian Nationhood. His massive scholarly studies enlightened the minds of dominant social group as to the essential oneness of the peoples of India, notwithstanding their social and cultural diversities or particulars of social life. His liberal and imaginative approach to tribal development enabled the Government of India to formulate a tribal policy which combined the quality of idealism and realism in the contemporary social and cultural life of India, thereby helped to bring about a synthesis of the traditional and modern elements of India's life and thought in the new Indian nation.'

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES

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Abstract. In this paper on the educational development of Scheduled Tribes the extent and level of literacy, inter-district variation in literacy, inter-tribe variation in literacy and variation in literacy between males and females have been analysed and compared with the general population on the basis of quantitative information from the Census and other sources. The problems of stagnation and wastage have been discussed, and enrolment trends at different stages of education of the Scheduled Tribes have been indicated. The programmes in the plans for the educational development of Scheduled Tribes at pre-matric and post-matric stages have been described and certain suggestions made to accelerate the pace of their educational development.

THE progress of Scheduled Tribes in India is closely linked up with their educational advancement, more so in today's changing world in which education plays an increasing role in everyday life apart from equipping a person with the necessary skills for more effective participation in different spheres of economic activity. The extent of educational development in the Scheduled Tribe population is, however, extremely low. According to the 1961 Census, only 8.5 per cent of the tribal population in India is literate compared to 10.3 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population and 24.0 per cent general literacy. In all the States except Bihar, the extent of literacy is lower in the tribal population than in the Scheduled Caste population. In some States like Gujarat, Kerala, Madras and Maharashtra, which rank high in regard to extent of literacy in the general population and Scheduled Caste population, the gap in extent of literacy in Scheduled Caste population and Scheduled Tribe population is the highest, namely, more than 7 per cent.

Table 1, which gives the extent of literacy in each State in

the general population and the tribal population, shows that in seven States the gap in literacy is more than 15 per cent and in three States, namely, Kerala, Madras and Maharashtra, which are educationally more advanced, the gap is more than 22 per cent. With the exception of Assam, in all other States the gap is more than 9 per cent. The coefficient of correlation between extent of literacy in general population and extent of literacy in tribal population is +0.529 indicating that States with higher literacy in general population tend to have a higher

TABLE 1

Extent of literacy in Scheduled Tribe population and the general population

State	Percentage of literate in the total population	Percentage of literate in the Scheduled Tribe population
1. Andhra Pradesh	21.19	4.41
2. Assam	27.36	23.55
3. Bihar	18.40	9.18
4. Gujarat	30.45	11.69
5. Kerala	46.85	17.26
6. Madhya Pradesh	17.12	5.09
7. Madras	31.41	5.91
8. Maharashtra	29.81	7.22
9. Mysore	25.40	8.15
10. Orissa	21.66	7.36
11. Rajasthan	15.21	3.97
12. West Bengal	29.27	6.55

Source : Census of India, 1961 ; Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab have not been included here because in the 1961 Census, U. P. and Jammu & Kashmir had no tribal population while in Punjab the tribal population was very small.

literacy in tribal population. However, States with higher literacy in general population tend to have a larger gap with extent of literacy in tribal population, the coefficient of correlation between extent of literacy in general population and gap in literacy in general population and Scheduled Tribe population being +0.630.

There is also variation in the level of literacy in tribal population in different States as will be evident from the data in Table 2 giving the number of Scheduled Tribe persons per 1,000 in each educational category. In all States except Assam, even in the category 'literate without educational level', the number of Scheduled Tribe persons per 1,000 in this

TABLE 2

Number of Scheduled Tribe persons per 1,000 persons in each educational category

State	Number of Scheduled Tribe persons per 1,000 persons in each educational category				
	Number of Scheduled Tribe person per 1,000 persons	Illiterate	Literate without educational level	Primary or Junior Basic	Matric and above
1. Andhra Pradesh	37	45	10	6	1
2. Assam	174	183	172	106	46
3. Bihar	91	101	45	56	17
4. Gujarat	134	169	55	53	4
5. Kerala	13	20	5	4	1
6. Madhya Pradesh	206	236	68	56	Neg.
7. Madras	7	10	2	1	4
8. Maharashtra	61	80	22	9	1
9. Mysore	8	10	3	1	1
10. Orissa	241	285	83	89	16
11. Rajasthan	115	130	33	27	5
12. West Bengal	59	78	17	10	2

Source : Based on 1961 Census data.

educational category is substantially lower than the number of Scheduled Tribe persons per 1,000 persons in the State. In

all the States there is a sharp fall in the category matric-and-above, but there is no definite pattern which emerges in regard to the number of Scheduled Tribe persons matric-and-above per 1,000 in this educational category in relation to the educational development in the State. For instance, Gujarat which ranks third in regard to literacy in tribal population has a very small number of tribal persons per 1,000 matric-and-above compared to the proportion of tribal population in the State while in Bihar which ranks fifth, the representation of tribal people in this educational category is much more favourable.

Inter-district Variation

There is not only variation between States in extent and level of literacy in tribal population but also between different districts within a State as will be evident from Table 3. The

TABLE 3

Variation in extent of literacy in Scheduled Tribe population in different districts in a State

State	Lowest percentage of literacy in Scheduled Tribe population in a district	Highest percentage of literacy in Scheduled Tribe population in a district	Range	Standard deviation
1. Andhra Pradesh	1.37	13.54	21.17	2.91
2. Assam	10.88	43.34	32.46	8.08
3. Bihar	4.09	32.43	28.34	6.99
4. Gujarat	2.56	20.92	18.36	5.71
5. Kerala	4.46	38.57	34.11	9.90
6. Madhya Pradesh	0.72	12.72	12.00	2.61
7. Madras	3.90	40.97	37.07	11.34
8. Maharashtra	1.29	17.00	15.71	3.04
9. Mysore	0.30	15.56	15.26	4.75
10. Orissa	3.17	12.59	9.42	2.68
11. Rajasthan	0.92	13.34	12.42	3.07
12. West Bengal	2.51	33.61	31.10	7.26

Source : Based on 1961 Census data ; districts with less than 1,000 tribal population have not been taken into consideration.

data show that in three States the lowest percentage of literacy in tribal population in a district is less than 1 per cent. The range, *i.e.*, the difference between highest percentage of literacy in a district and lowest percentage of literacy in a district in a State, is more than 28 per cent in the States of Assam, Bihar,

Kerala, Madras and West Bengal. The standard deviation of percentage literacy in tribal population in different districts in a State is also high in these States which, with the exception of Madras and West Bengal, rank high in regard to the spread of literacy in tribal population.

A study by the Cultural Research Institute of the Government of West Bengal on Scheduled Tribe students getting post-matric scholarships also showed inter-district variation in regard to the extent to which tribal students from different districts availed of the scholarships. It was found that about 50 per cent of Scheduled Tribe students in the post-matric stage were from Darjeeling and Hooghly districts though only 11 per cent of the tribal population in the State lived in these two districts.

The degree of association between literacy in general population in a district and literacy in tribal population was computed from the 1961 Census data. Table 4, which gives the coefficients of correlation, shows that in all the States it is positive and significant, indicating that districts with higher literacy in general population tend to have higher literacy in tribal population. The coefficient of correlation between literacy in general population in a district and gap between literacy in general population and in tribal population is also positive in all the States except Kerala.

TABLE 4

Association between literacy in general population in a district and literacy in Scheduled Tribe population

State	Correlation between percentage of literacy in general population in a district and percentage of literacy in Scheduled Tribe population	Correlation between percentage of literacy in general population in a district and gap between percentage of literacy in general population and Scheduled Tribe population
1. Andhra Pradesh	+0.794	+0.930
2. Assam	+0.794	+0.138
3. Bihar	+0.591	+0.113
4. Gujarat	+0.715	+0.776
5. Kerala	+0.889	-0.447
6. Madhya Pradesh	+0.323	+0.821
7. Madras	+0.792	+0.316
8. Maharashtra	+0.411	+0.918
9. Mysore	+0.526	+0.748
10. Orissa	+0.432	+0.918
11. Rajasthan	+0.623	+0.705
12. West Bengal	+0.771	+0.736

Inter-tribe Variation

There is also variation in extent of literacy in different tribes. Table 5 indicates the position among the numerically large tribes in a State, i.e., those with a population of more than 5,000. The data show that in three States, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, the minimum percentage of literacy in a tribe is less than one per cent while in five States, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Mysore, Orissa and Rajasthan, the minimum percentage of literacy in a tribe is less than 2 per cent. The highest percentages of literacy in a tribe are in Kerala and Assam which, incidentally, occupy the first two ranks in regard to the spread of literacy in the tribal

TABLE 5

Variation in extent of literacy in different Scheduled Tribes in State

State	Maxium percentage of literacy in a Scheduled Tribe	Minimum percentage of literacy in a Scheduled Tribe	Range	Standard deviation
1. Andhra Pradesh	10.71	0.94	9.97	3.37
2. Assam	49.02	8.89	40.13	11.68
3. Bihar	13.81	2.24	11.57	3.33
4. Gujarat	23.94	1.88	22.06	5.48
5. Kerala	53.17	2.17	51.00	14.80
6. Madhya Pradesh	14.25	0.34	13.91	3.26
7. Madras	9.63	3.29	6.34	2.40
8. Maharashtra	20.65	2.03	18.62	4.31
9. Mysore	10.16	1.89	8.27	3.12
10. Orissa	10.77	0.82	9.95	2.67
11. Rajasthan	5.16	1.30	3.86	1.59
12. West Bengal	25.06	3.57	21.49	7.30

Source: Based on 1961 Census data. Only Scheduled Tribes with population 5,000 and above were taken into consideration.

population. The range is also the maximum in those two States. The standard deviation of percentage literacy in a State is the highest in those States which rank higher in regard to the spread of literacy in tribal population, namely, Assam and Kerala.

A study by the Cultural Research Institute, Government of West Bengal, regarding the extent of utilization of post-matric scholarships by tribes too found variation in this regard between tribes. For instance, Lepchas and Bhutias who constitute about 2 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe population were awarded 27.40 per cent of the post-matric scholarship in 1966-67.³ Ninetyeight per cent of the students getting post-matric scholarships came from eight Scheduled Tribes who constitute 91 per cent of the tribal population in the State. Twenty-six Scheduled Tribes did not have any student in the post-matric stage.⁴ The study further reported that the trend in this regard was the same as in 1959-60.

Another study by this Institute on progress of secondary education among the Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal found considerable variation between tribes at this level of education as well. In two tribes more than 35 per cent of the students of secondary school-going age in 1960-61 attended school while in 9 tribes the percentage was less than 10 per cent. Further, eighteen Scheduled Tribes had no school-going students in the secondary stage.⁵

A few other studies indicate the same trend. A study of tribal students getting post-matric scholarships in Maharashtra in 1962-63 showed that 17.2 per cent of the post-matric scholarships in 1962-63 were availed by Gonds who comprise 11.4 per cent of the tribal population in the State while no scholarship was availed by the Varli tribe who comprise 10.2 per cent of the tribal population in the State.⁶ The study on living conditions of Similipal Hills in Orissa too showed difference in extent of literacy among tribes. Among the Bhumija, for instance, the extent of literacy was only 1.2 per cent while among the Santals it was 16.1 per cent.⁷

Literacy among Females

The extent of literacy among Scheduled Tribe females is only 3.16 per cent as compared to 13.83 per cent among Scheduled Tribe males. The gap at the all-India level between literacy among females and males is 10.67 per cent, but the position varies significantly from State to State as will be evident from the data in Table 6. In several States the extent of literacy in the tribal female population is extremely low. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, for instance, less than 1 per cent of the female tribal population is literate, while in six States, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal, less than 2 per cent of the female tribal population is literate. It is only in Assam and Kerala that more than 10 per cent of the tribal females are literate. In seven States the gap in literacy between Scheduled Tribe males and females is more than 10 per cent. The coefficient of correlation between

TABLE 6

Extent of literacy in tribal male and female population

State	Percentage of literacy in Scheduled Tribe males	Percentage of literacy in Scheduled Tribe females	Gap in literacy
1. Andhra Pradesh	7.26	1.48	5.78
2. Assam	31.09	15.72	15.37
3. Bihar	15.22	3.18	12.04
4. Gujarat	19.06	4.09	14.97
5. Kerala	22.63	11.92	10.71
6. Madhya Pradesh	9.25	0.97	8.28
7. Madras	8.93	2.73	6.20
8. Maharashtra	12.55	1.75	10.80
9. Mysore	13.24	2.81	10.43
10. Orissa	13.04	1.77	11.27
11. Rajasthan	7.39	0.28	7.11
12. West Bengal	11.20	1.76	9.44

Source : Based on 1961 Census data.

the extent of literacy in Scheduled Tribe males and Scheduled Tribe females is +0.935 indicating that States with higher literacy among males tend to have higher literacy among females as well. The coefficient of correlation between percentage of literacy among Scheduled Tribe males and gap in literacy between Scheduled Tribe males and females is +0.839 indicating that States with higher literacy in tribal male population tend to have a larger gap.

Table 7 gives the number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 Scheduled Tribe males in each educational category. The data show that the number of Scheduled Tribes female

TABLE 7

Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 Scheduled Tribe males in each educational category

State	Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 Scheduled Tribe males	Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 Scheduled Tribe males in each educational category			
		Illiterate	Literate without educational level	Primary or Junior Basic	Matric and above
1. Andhra Pradesh	975	1,036	206	181	75
2. Assam	956	1,169	528	318	335
3. Bihar	1,014	1,158	206	231	205
4. Gujarat	969	1,149	186	221	78
5. Kerala	1,006	1,145	540	515	305
6. Madhya Pradesh	1,003	1,094	111	83	67
7. Madras	951	1,015	275	361	177
8. Maharashtra	978	1,099	154	89	55
9. Mysore	953	1,068	204	214	96
10. Orissa	1,016	1,148	142	115	43
11. Rajasthan	926	998	35	29	13
12. West Bengal	969	1,072	162	127	117

Source : Based on 1961 Census data.

per 1,000 Scheduled Tribe males is extremely low in all the educational categories, particularly at the level matric-and-above. Comparatively speaking, Assam and Kerala, which have the highest literacy in the tribal population, have also a

larger representation of females at the higher educational levels, while States like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh which have low literacy in the tribal population also have a low representation of females at the higher educational levels.

Other studies, too, report that female literacy among tribals is lagging behind. A socio-economic survey by the Tribal Research Institute, Udaipur, showed that at the primary level there are 10 tribal girl students for every 100 tribal boy students, while at the middle and secondary level there are 7 tribal girl students for every 100 tribal students.⁸ In Chintapalli Tribal Development Block in Visakapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh, the situation was somewhat better, there being 35 tribal girl students for every 100 tribal boy students.⁹ A Bihar study reported that 43 girls attended schools for every 100 boys.¹⁰

Table 8 gives the number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 females in each educational category. The data

TABLE 8

Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 females in each educational category

State	Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 females in the population	Number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 females in each educational category			
		Illiterate	Literate without educational level	Primary or Junior Basic	Matric and above
1. Andhra Pradesh	37	41	5	3	1
2. Assam	182	183	206	99	89
3. Bihar	91	95	36	80	46
4. Gujarat	135	161	29	30	1
5. Kerala	13	18	4	3	1
6. Madhya Pradesh	212	225	33	26	1
7. Madras	7	9	1	1	Neg.
8. Maharashtra	62	73	10	3	Neg.
9. Mysore	8	9	3	Neg.	Neg.
10. Orissa	243	271	49	59	9
11. Rajasthan	116	123	6	5	Neg.
12. West Bengal	68	73	8	4	2

Source : Based on 1961 Census data.

show that, except in Bihar and Assam, the number of Scheduled Tribe females per 1,000 females in the different educational categories is extremely unsatisfactory. In both these States in the category matric-and-above the number of Scheduled tribe females per 1,000 females is about half the number of tribal females per 1,000 females in the total population.

Enrolment Trends

During the last few decades school facilities have expanded in tribal areas and tribal children are increasingly attending educational institutions. Shah, for instance, reported that in Gujarat 1898, 0.63 per cent of the Hindu tribals were literate while in 1955-57, the percentage literacy was 14.92 for Dublas, 16.09 for Naikas, 20.69 for Dhankas and 32.64 for Gamit.¹¹ Similar developments have been reported by other research workers^{9, 10, 12, 13, 14.}

The Education Ministry collect information from different State Governments on the percentage enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students to total enrolment at different levels of education. Table 9 gives the statistics for 1960-61 and 1964-65. The data show that, at the primary level, the percentage enrolment of Scheduled Tribes has improved in all the States except Mysore, the percentage of increase being more than 3.5 in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. While in 1960-61, in two States, Assam and Maharashtra, the percentage enrolment of tribal children at primary level was higher than the percentage of tribal population in the State ; in 1964-65 this was so in the case of four States, namely, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In the other States, the gap is reducing and the progress in this direction has been significant in the case of two States with sizeable tribal population, but educationally reported as backward by the 1961 Census, namely, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. In the middle, high/higher secondary and higher educational levels in several States the percentage enrolment in 1964-65 is higher then in 1960-61 ; in a few States, however, there is a marginal fall. This could be either because the

TABLE 9

Percentage enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students to total enrolment at primary/junior basic, middle/senior basic, high/higher secondary and higher education levels in 1960-61 and 1964-65.

State	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe	Percentage enrolment of Scheduled Tribes							
		Primary/Junior Basic		Middle/Senior Basic		High/Higher Secondary		Higher educational level	
		1960-61	1964-65	1960-61	1964-65	1960-61	1964-65	1960-61	1964-65
1. Andhra Pradesh	3.7	2.3	2.4	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.3
2. Assam	17.4	24.0	25.0	16.2	19.1	9.3	13.0	9.8	11.1
3. Bihar	9.1	8.7	9.7	7.4	7.9	3.7	3.4	2.4	3.2
4. Gujarat	13.3	12.4	15.9	7.5	5.8	1.9	2.4	0.2	2.7
5. Kerala	1.2	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3	—	0.2
6. Madhya Pradesh	20.6	12.3	15.9	6.5	6.0	2.2	4.0	2.2	1.4
7. Madras	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.3
8. Maharashtra	6.1	6.6	6.8	0.2	2.3	1.0	1.7	0.6	0.6
9. Mysore	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.1	Neg.
10. Orissa	24.1	13.6	16.0	12.6	9.8	3.7	4.4	1.3	1.5
11. Rajasthan	11.7	2.3	8.2	0.9	4.0	0.6	3.2	0.5	0.8
12. West Bengal	5.9	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.7	1.4	1.2	0.3	0.3

Source : Ministry of Education, Government of India. In the case of Orissa, the data relate to 1959-60 and not 1960-61.

enrolment in the general population has increased at a faster rate or because there has been a larger incidence of drop-out and wastage in the case of tribal students than in the general population. Four States which have shown improvement in percentage enrolment of Scheduled Tribes at all levels are Assam, Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

A study by the Cultural Research Institute, West Bengal, also showed progressive increase in enrolment in the case of students attending the secondary stage of education, though the progress was not uniform in the case of all the tribes. Taking 100 as the base year value of students attending recognized secondary schools in 1957-58, the index number in 1958-59, 1959-60 and 1960-61 were 105, 107 and 118 respectively.¹⁵

Table 10 gives the gap at different levels of education between percentage enrolment of tribal children to total enrolment (1964-65) and the percentage of tribal population in the State. The data show that at the primary level in four States the percentage enrolment of tribal children is higher than the

TABLE 10

Difference between percentage enrolment (1964-55) of Scheduled Tribe children at different educational levels and percentage population of Scheduled Tribe.

State	Primary/ Junior Basic	Middle/ Senior Basic	High/ Higher Secondary	Higher Education
1. Andhra Pradesh	-1.3	- 2.9	- 3.1	- 3.4
2. Assam	+7.6	+ 1.7	- 4.4	- 6.3
3. Bihar	+0.6	- 1.2	- 5.7	- 5.9
4. Gujarat	+2.6	- 7.5	-10.9	-10.6
5. Kerala	-0.6	- 0.7	- 0.9	- 1.0
6. Madhya Pradesh	-4.7	-14.6	-16.6	-19.2
7. Madras	-	- 0.4	- 0.4	- 0.4
8. Maharashtra	+0.7	- 3.8	- 4.4	- 5.5
9. Mysore	-0.2	- 0.4	- 0.4	- 0.8
10. Orissa	-8.1	-14.3	- 19.7	-22.6
11. Rajasthan	-3.5	- 7.7	- 8.5	-10.9
12. West Bengal	-2.4	- 2.2	- 4.7	- 5.6

percentage of tribal population in the States; in one State, there is no gap while in two States the gap is less than 1 per cent. At the middle/senior basic level, only Assam has a higher percentage of enrolment of tribal children than the percentage of tribal population in the State; in three States the gap is less than 1 per cent. At the high/higher secondary and higher educational levels, in all the States there is a gap. In the States of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan, which have a sizeable tribal population, the gap is more pronounced. In all the States, the gap tends to increase with a rise in the educational level.

The extent of enrolment of Scheduled Tribe students in vocational and technical courses is rather low. A study on Scheduled Tribe students getting post-matric scholarships conducted by the Cultural Research Institute, Government of West Bengal, showed that 78 per cent took courses in Arts and Commerce subjects, about 15 per cent in Science subjects and only about 7 per cent in technical subjects.¹⁶ Data available from two other States, namely, Gujarat and Orissa, show a somewhat better distribution. Information available from the Industrial Training Institutes in different parts of the country show that although in each State, there is reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes equal to the proportion of Scheduled Tribe population in the State and a stipend of Rs. 45 per month is given to Scheduled Tribe trainees, in all the States the percentage of Scheduled Tribe trainees to total trainees is lower than the percentage of Scheduled Tribe population in the State. Apart from the general preference of all groups for white-collar occupations, the other reasons for this trend are restricted mobility due to which the Scheduled Tribe boys do not go to study at places far away from home, poor economic condition of the family and inability of the family to permit the boy to undergo a fresh period of training instead of supporting the family. Most Scheduled Tribe boys are also not aware of the job opportunities and pay scales after completing a course in the Industrial Training Institute *vis a vis* completing a general course of education.

TABLE 11

Course-wise award of post-matric scholarship to Scheduled Tribe students in 1966-67.

Course	Gujarat		Orissa	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1. Inter Science/B. Sc./M.Sc.	231	17.6	116	22.1
2. Inter Arts/B.A./M.A.	543	41.2	322	61.2
3. Inter Com./B.Com./M.Com.	73	5.5	7	1.3
4. LL.B./Honours/Other Oriental Languages/Fine Arts/Correspondence	14	1.1	5	1.0
5. D.Sc./D.Litt./Ph.D.	—	—	—	—
6. Diploma Certificate Course in Agriculture/Veterinary Science etc.	—	—	—	—
7. Teachers' Training and Physical Education	107	8.1	4	0.8
8. B. Sc. Agriculture/B. V. Sc. Diploma Courses in Rural Science/Civil and Rural Engineering	12	0.9	8	1.5
9. Post-Graduate Courses in Agriculture	—	—	—	—
10. Bachelor of Nursing and Pharmacy	—	—	—	—
11. Diploma Certificate Course in Engineering/Architecture etc.	27	2.1	50	9.5
12. Degree Course in Engineering	28	2.1	14	2.7
13. Other Courses	282	21.4	—	—
Total :	1,317	100.0	526	100.0

Source : Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 1967-68. Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1969.

TABLE 12

State-wise distribution of the number of candidates undergoing training in I. T. Is. and the number of Scheduled Tribe candidates among them (May 1969)

State	Total number of trainees	Number of Scheduled Tribe trainees	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe trainees	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe population in State
1. Andhra Pradesh	7,329	69	0.94	3.68
2. Assam	1,647	82	4.98	17.39
3. Bihar	8,689	378	4.35	9.05
4. Gujarat	3,447	144	4.18	13.35
5. Kerala	5,551	23	0.41	1.26
6. Madhya Pradesh	4,689	709	15.12	20.63
7. Madras	11,013	6	0.05	0.75
8. Maharashtra	12,374	264	2.13	6.06
9. Mysore	3,456	14	0.41	0.81
10. Orissa	1,584	184	11.61	24.07
11. Rajasthan	1,657	18	1.09	11.67
12. West Bengal	5,397	48	0.89	5.86

Stagnation and Wastage

The large extent of stagnation and wastage in Indian education has been pointed out by the Education Commission which stated that stagnation and wastage is highest in class I.¹⁷ The study by the National Council of Educational Research and Training on wastage and stagnation in primary and middle schools in India also showed that the total rate of wastage and stagnation is 65.30 per cent by the time children

reach grade V and 78.35 per cent by the time they reach grade VIII.¹⁸ Separate data regarding the tribal population are not available in these reports although reference has been made to the larger incidence of drop-outs among the backward class students, including Scheduled Tribes.

Studies conducted elsewhere point in the same direction. Naik's study of education among Bhils in Madhya Pradesh showed that very few Bhil children attend school after the 5th standard. The study reported only 0.9 per cent tribal students above 5th standard as compared to 4.9 per cent tribal student up to 5th standard.¹⁹ A study by the Cultural Research Institute of the Government of West Bengal²⁰ on the extent of stagnation, based on returns from 3,992 secondary schools in 1962, showed a larger incidence of stagnation among tribal students as will be evident from the following figures :

	Percentage of stagnation in classes					
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Scheduled Castes	24.1	25.5	27.7	31.9	38.6	78.6
Scheduled Tribes	25.4	29.2	34.7	40.5	53.6	78.6
Other communities	21.4	23.4	27.4	29.7	32.8	65.2

The incidence of stagnation among Scheduled Tribes is more than one-third from class VII onwards, whereas for Scheduled Castes this is so from class IX onwards and for other communities this is so in class X.

A study by the Tribal Research and Training Institute, Ahmedabad, draws attention to the large incidence of stagnation and wastage in primary education in tribal areas of Gujarat. It reported that in both Shamlaji Tribal Development Block (Sabarkantha district) and Sukhsar Tribal Development Block (Panchmahal district) there were only 10 and 11 students respectively in standard VII for every 100 children in

standard I. The study also reported that nearly 75 per cent of the children in both the Blocks left school before completing standard IV. Further, 84 per cent of the students in Shamlaji Block and 60 per cent of the students in Sukhsar Block who had left their studies dropped out in standard I. Only 31 per cent were able to pass standard I examination in their first attempt, while the rest had to make two, three or even four attempts. The volume of stagnation in subsequent standards was not, however, much.³¹

The survey of Simalwara Tribal Development Block by the Tribal Research Institute, Udaipur, showed that there were less than 2 tribal students in class X for every 100 tribal students in class I. Further, although half the students up to class V were tribal, the proportion in classes VI to XI was only about one-fourth, indicating greater incidence of discontinuation of studies.³² Das Gupta, too, in his study of problems of tribal education among Santals reported that in 16 schools out of 60 the extent of wastage was more than 50 per cent.³³

Programmes of Educational Development

In the past, a large part of the efforts for the educational development of tribal people was initiated by voluntary organizations and missionaries. Since independence, the government has promoted the educational development of these communities to a significant degree. In addition to granting exemption to Scheduled Tribe students from payment of tuition fees, a number of other schemes are being implemented by the state governments for the promotion of education among tribal people. A large number of primary schools have been opened in tribal areas and, apart from some pockets of poor communication and dispersed settlements, primary schools have been set up within fair walking distance. Scholarships/stipends, hostel facilities, boarding grants, midday meals, school uniforms and book grants have been provided to students. During the Third Plan and the period 1966 to 1969, Rs. 18.7 crores have been spent by state governments on educational schemes which represents six-tenths of the total

expenditure for tribal welfare in the backward classes sector.²⁴ In the Third Plan, scholarships and stipends were given to 10.22 lakh students ; 876 hostels/boarding houses were set-up/assisted ; book and equipment grants were given to 1.14 lakh students and midday meals to 41,282 students ; 154 *ashram* schools were opened. In 1966-67, scholarships/stipends were given to 1,08,922 students.

An important scheme for the education of tribals has been the setting up of *ashram* schools. These are residential institutions up to primary or middle standard and aim at providing a system of education which is related to tribal life and is also relevant to it. In this system teachers and students live together. The students are given education as well as training in agriculture, crafts, gardening etc. so that, after the students have completed their education, they may be in a position to settle in the community as better citizens and farmers. The schools have agricultural land attached to them along with cattle, sheep, goats, poultry etc. The students are provided with free boarding and lodging. In recent years a few day-scholars and non-tribal students have also been admitted to these institutions. A large number of these institutions are managed by voluntary organizations.

For higher education, post-matric scholarships are being given to Scheduled Tribe students since 1948-49. These scholarships are awarded to all tribal students without any means-or-merit test. The scholarships cover maintenance allowance, compulsory non-refundable fees, study-tour charges in professional courses and thesis-typing charges. The maintenance charges in the scholarships vary from Rs. 40 for hostellers and Rs. 27 for day-scholars for undergraduate and graduate courses to Rs. 75 for hostellers and Rs. 60 for day-scholars in professional degree courses like engineering, medicine etc.

The number of scholarships awarded has shown a phenomenal increase from 84 only in 1948-49 to 576 in 1951-52 (first year of the First Plan), 8,548 in 1961-62 (first year of the Third Plan) and 20,815 in 1967-68. Table 13 gives the state-wise

distribution of post-matric scholarships awarded to Scheduled Tribe students in the Third Plan and the two years following it. The data show that more than two-thirds of the scholarships are awarded to students from two states, namely, Assam and Bihar, although they have only one-fifth of the tribal population in these 12 states.

TABLE 13

State-wise distribution of post-matric scholarships awarded to Scheduled Tribe students

State	Third Plan		1966-67		1967-68	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1. Andhra Pradesh	963	1.8	255	1.6	286	1.5
2. Assam	23,182	42.5	5,813	35.9	6,492	34.6
3. Bihar	16,432	30.1	4,538	28.0	5,884	31.4
4. Gujarat	2,307	4.2	1,317	8.1	1,431	7.6
5. Kerala	430	0.8	214	1.3	214	1.2
6. Madhya Pradesh	3,799	6.9	1,638	10.1	1,477	7.9
7. Madras	194	0.3	86	0.5	98	0.5
8. Maharashtra	1,769	3.2	628	3.9	676	3.6
9. Mysore	197	0.4	68	0.4	80	0.4
10. Orissa	1,777	3.3	536	3.3	667	3.6
11. Rajasthan	1,679	3.1	538	3.3	749	4.0
12. West Bengal	1,848	3.4	583	3.6	696	3.7
Total :	54,577	100.0	16,214	100.0	18,750	100.0

Certain weaknesses and difficulties in the measures for promotion of education among the tribal people have been

brought out in several studies.^{25,26,27,28,29} These have indicated that apart from financial constraints, there are deficiencies in the school system and in the socio-economic framework. Establishment of single-teacher schools in many areas, recruitment of teachers unacquainted with tribal language and culture, deficiencies in their training, their weak motivation and unwillingness to stay in tribal areas, difficulties of accommodation and problems arising from staying away from families are important factors which hinder progress. The distance of middle and secondary schools, their timing, absence of adequate hostel facilities, deficiencies in school buildings and equipment, and weaknesses in supervision of schools in tribal areas also impede the development of education. An unattractive school environment, absence of any attempt on the part of teachers to motivate parents, the poverty of the parents, their inability to dispense with the services of their children who assist them in earning a livelihood or in looking after the younger children, late age of admission of children, illiteracy of parents and lack of parental help and encouragement at home in pursuing studies are other factors which often lead to irregularity in attendance or even dropping out.

Even the *ashram* schools which were conceived as highly suitable for tribal people and have been reported as satisfactory in Orissa and Maharashtra appear to have been found not equally satisfactory in other places like Rajasthan. The strength of this system of education lies in the imparting of education relevant to tribal life and of equipping the students with knowledge and skills which will be of use to them. A further advantage is that irregularity of attendance and the extent of drop-out is much lower, at least, in the case of the better acculturated tribes.³⁰ Among its weaknesses are the high cost and inadequacies in the crafts and trades taught to students. Das,³¹ for instance, reported that 'except a few boys, particularly in Mayurbhanj, who had got sewing machines on loan and were working as tailors, no other student had after passing the Ashram school been settled as craftsman. The first preference of the boys is for higher general education and

second, government services; those who could not do either settle down as cultivators.' Although there are a large number of *ashram* schools in the country, the system has not really been empirically studied. It is worth examining to what extent the education is of a terminal nature. Although, technically, students passing from these institutions can join higher education elsewhere, it is worth empirically investigating how they fare when they come into the general stream of education at the higher levels; also, to what extent this level of craft-training is adequate to enable them to set themselves up independently. It would also be interesting to know how many of them go in for technical education in the I. T. Is. or other technical schools.

The working of the scheme of post-matric scholarship has shown that stagnation and wastage among students continues to be high and a larger share of scholarships goes to tribes or groups within these tribes who are more advanced than others. Hostel facilities, particularly for girls, are inadequate. The rates of scholarship have remained static and tribal students from poor families have to face difficulties on this account. Delay in receiving scholarships puts the students to a lot of inconvenience. Educational programmes, like several other development activities, seem to be benefiting the more advanced tribes as well as groups within them. Naik's study of the Bhils in Madhya Pradesh showed that 'children of the upper crust of the Bhil society, Bhilala farmers, big patels and zamindars and other well-to-do Bhils have been able to go to school and take advantage of the scholarships or hostel facilities made available to them by the Government.'⁸³

Conclusion

While there is no doubt about the progress in education of Scheduled Tribes since independence, there are a number of measures which should be undertaken to accelerate the pace of their educational development. A number of suggestions have been made by research workers, and by committees and commissions set up from time to time.^{82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88} At

the pre-matric stage it is necessary not only to bring about larger enrolment of children but also to retain them in school. A great emphasis has to be given to the improvement of the quality of education and to the reduction of stagnation and wastage. School facilities have to be improved and expanded in remote areas and a larger number of students provided with pre-matric scholarships/stipends, book-grants, school uniforms and midday meals. Teaching in the initial stages should be in the mother tongue of the students and the regional language should be introduced gradually to open the door for higher education. Greater care should be exercised in the recruitment and placement of teachers in schools in tribal areas so that not only are they conversant with tribal language and culture but are also able to adapt themselves to the social, economic and physical environment. The school curriculum, school hours, school vacation and the school programme should be consistent with the situation in tribal areas. To the extent resources permit, single-teacher schools should give way to appointment of more than one teacher. Their training facilities need to be considerably expanded and improved. At the middle and higher secondary stages, residential facilities need to be expanded and in this regard voluntary organizations have a useful role to play. The weaker students should be provided with coaching facilities while brighter students should be encouraged to enable them to realize their full potentialities of development. The facilities for science education should be expanded in tribal areas and the tribal children encouraged to go in for science and professional courses. Efforts should also be made to bring in more tribal students to the vocational courses. In the case of *ashram* schools it is necessary to consolidate and improve the standards of existing ones, particularly in regard to the crafts and trades that are taught. At the post-matric level, the present administrative difficulties leading to delay in the award of scholarships should be removed. Research on various aspects of educational development in tribal areas has to be promoted so that the limited resources are deployed in the best possible manner.

R E F E R E N C E S

¹The paper has been written by Dr. A. B. Bose in his personal capacity and reflects his own views. Dr. Bose is Joint Director (Social Planning) in the Planning Commission.

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³A. K. Das and R. N. Saha, Post-Matric Education Among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal, *Bulletin of the Cultural Research Institute*, 7, 11-23, 1968.

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²²*Needs, Facilities and People : A Socio-Economic Survey of Simalwara Tribal Development Block II*, Tribal Research Institute, Udaipur, 1968.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

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STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION : MALINOWSKI AND RADCLIFFE-BROWN RE-EXAMINED

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Abstract. Malinowski's functionalism was founded on the idea of a universal structure which resulted from the fundamental human need of entering into organization. Malinowski's concept of institution was not only a good field-work tool but was conceived as a microcosm of culture. Confusions about Malinowski's idea about form and function, and his being anti-historical, etc., have been clarified. Radcliffe-Brown has been wrongly accused of confining social structure to merely person-to-person relationships. But he did not distinguish between functioning and having a function. Radcliffe-Brown, not Malinowski, was a prisoner of the implications of organismic analogy.

The Foundation of Malinowski's Functionalism

MALINOWSKI was a functionalist. He did not have any concept of structure. Radcliffe-Brown has given us an elegant concept of social structure. In contradistinction to Malinowski's functionalism, Radcliffe-Brown has advocated the more fruitful structural-functionalism. Firth has opined that 'on the structural side, Malinowski's concept of functional analysis has always been weak...' (1956 : 239). All the above statements, including Firth's, are commonplace in current anthropological literature. But for some time I have been bothered about them. It is difficult to believe, notwithstanding Levi-Strauss to the contrary, that one can have any worthwhile concept of function without that of structure. We shall find out if Malinowski successfully accomplished the task of positing functionalism without a notion of structure. Let us begin with examining the foundation on which Malinowski built his functionalism.

Ever since Firth distinguished between social organization and social structure, the two terms are used in their special senses. Formerly, social organization used to denote topics/areas of study such as matriliney, clan, exogamy and kinship, etc. But by social organization Malinowski meant 'the standardized manner in which groups behave' (1931 : 622). He would not agree with the sociologists who considered social organization as remaining outside culture. A decade after his death, Fortes said that 'social structure is not one aspect of culture but the entire culture of a given people handled in a special frame of theory' (1953 : 21). It is clear now that in the post-World War II period British (social) anthropologists found it necessary to advocate the study of social structure instead of culture as the hall-mark of their identity. Malinowski would have considered it superfluous.

Taking Malinowski as the example, Levi-Strauss states 'a functionalist may be far from a structuralist' (1963 : 290). This may or may not be true, but Levi-Strauss's own work shows that a structuralist of his brand can do without being a functionalist. In 1935, Radcliffe-Brown acknowledged himself that the views expressed by him could be taken to represent one form of functionalism (1952 : 185). But in 1941, while speaking 'on social structure', he contended that to call him 'a "functionalist"' would seem to me to convey no definite meaning' (1952 : 188). Since then he always put forth social structure as the key concept, though he continued talking about function as well.

Firth called Radcliffe-Brown a structural-functionalist probably because of the latter's following famous statement of 1935 : 'The concept of function as here defined thus involves the notion of a structure consisting of a *set of relations* amongst *unit entities...*' (1952 : 180 ; italics author's). Malinowski never said that anything could function without an ordered arrangement. His functionalism was not a device to account for amorphous things. On the other hand, he has said that the 'very definition (of function) implies another principle' (1960 : 39). Elaborating this, Malinowski said that 'the essential concept here is that of *organization*. In order to

achieve any purpose, reach any end, human beings have to organize' (1960 : 39 ; italics Malinowski's).

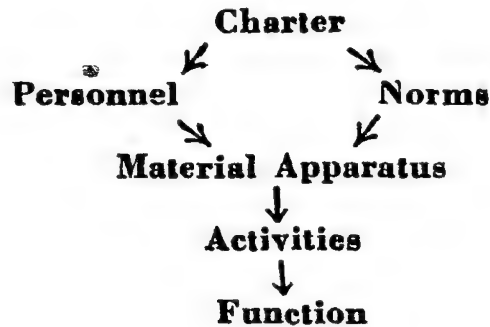
Several similarities between Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's views on function have also been pointed out by Firth in his famous essay on function (1956). A very important difference between the two is to be found with regard to the idea of structure. To Malinowski, structure (or organization, as he called it) was an essential, but only an instrumental, device for the satisfaction of needs. According to him, 'organization implies a very definite scheme or structure the main features of which are universal...' (1960 : 39). He called this universal unit of human organization an institution. Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, did not have any pre-determined ordered arrangement as social structure. In other words, Malinowski's structure was worked out by the anthropologist prior to his empirical study and was applicable to all organized groups. To Radcliffe-Brown, structure did not have any fixed parameters. It had to be deciphered in each specific case from the complexity of empirical data.

Microcosm and Macrocosm

Even vehement critics of Malinowski have complimented him for his concept of institution. But it is only considered as a good device for preliminary field-work. In general, anthropologists seem to be fully convinced of Malinowski's inability to conceive things theoretical. As a result of it he is not credited for something which none other than he has done.

In functionalism, emphasis is laid upon relating things. Malinowski was aware of the difficulties if one went on always correlating further and further. He would not like functionalism to lead one into 'the bog of relating and counter-relating objects' (1960 : 158). He was convinced that the task of science was '(to) isolate as well as (to) establish relations' (1960 : 158). He would not consider functionalism scientific if it did not point out isolates or units. The functional isolate setting forth 'natural limits of coordination and correlation', should be concrete, that is, can be observed 'as a definite social grouping,' and should be real in the sense that it should be possible to

'concretely draw a line around it'. Malinowski named his isolate 'institution' and was of the opinion that 'it has a structure universally valid' (1960 : 159). It may be well to remember that Malinowski's functionalism had an important structural base. This structure had the following universal pattern.



The idea of institution as an isolate or unit of culture was not put forth by Malinowski for the first time in the last years of his life. The following statement will prove that he had conceptualized it much earlier. 'The real component units of cultures which have a considerable degree of permanence, universality and independence are the organized systems of human activities called institutions' (1931 : 626). As pointed out above, its importance in field-work has been accepted by many. But its value as a conceptual model for analysis and comparison has not yet been realized by many an anthropologist. One marvels at the keen theoretical and conceptual perspective of Malinowski who is often considered a poor 'general' theorist.

Malinowski conceived of and presented institution as an isolate of culture. It is not to be seen as merely a relationship between a part and a whole. A whole has several parts which may be dissimilar. But in the Malinowskian system an institution is a miniature form of culture. In other words, an institution is the microcosm and the culture the macrocosm. All the aspects of culture—human and relational, material and technical as well as those connected with ideas, norms, values and ideals—are conspicuously represented in Malinowski's concept of institution. I do not think one can cite a parallel case of a masterly conceptualization in anthropology.

Form and Function

Firth complains that 'in his reaction against the aridities of purely formal comparison he (Malinowski) tended to regard form as determined by function to an extent which blinded him at times to the allowance that had to be made for the rigidities of social pattern' (1956 : 239). It is true that Malinowski has said that 'a functional study of the given culture...should exhaust all the possibilities of explaining form by function...' (1931 : 624). But too much should not be read into it because it was a reaction to the diffusionist advocacy of irrelevance of form and fortuitousness of concatenation. In fact, on the same page of his essay, Malinowski says that it would be premature to speculate on possible origins and stages 'until the *nature* of the various cultural phenomena, their *function* and their *form* are understood and described more fully' (1931 : 624 ; italics supplied).

If a stick is used as the digging stick, the walking staff and the punting pole, in Malinowski's view, its cultural identity could not be defined by its form alone. Similarly, he also felt that a complex artifact like a canoe cannot be defined only by its form. The technique and the manner in which the canoe is going to be used have an important bearing on 'the material object, the sailing craft, its form, its peculiarities' (Malinowski 1931 : 626).

It should be clear now that when Malinowski talks of form, either wholly or partly, being determined by function he refers to the shape of material objects such as a stick or a canoe. But when the term form has been used where we would today use the term structure, Malinowski does not state or imply that structure was completely or mostly determined by function. Not unlike his stand in 1931 (as is clear from the quotation in the previous paragraph), in his *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays* also, Malinowski announces emphatically that in functionalism we should define 'cultural phenomena in function as well as in form' (1960 : 176). In one word, it is not correct to say that everywhere or in each context, Malinowski regarded form as determined by function.

Was Malinowski anti-historical, anti-evolutionist and anti-diffusionist ?

For some reason it has been circulated that Malinowski was opposed to any type of historical, distributional or evolutionary study. Audrey Richards has pointed out that 'Malinowski indeed instructed his students to include a column for history in their field-work charts... The fact...remains that he was much more interested in a people's own concept of their history than in their actual history' (in Firth 1957 : 21). What Leach says about functionalists in general cannot be inapplicable to Malinowski : 'We functionalist anthropologists are not "anti-historical" in principle...' (1954 : 282). It is difficult to say how much damage was done—though it must have been considerable—and confusion was compounded by such intemperate statements as follows : 'In short, Malinowski's functionalism is avowedly anti-distributional, anti-historical, and treats each culture as a closed system...' (Lowie 1937 : 235). Malinowski speaks for himself through the following extracts taken from his most well-known theoretical writings :

Malinowski 1926 : 863 : 'Historical reconstructions within limited areas, such as have been done upon American material...give results which can be empirically verified, and therefore are of scientific value... Such sound works must be clearly distinguished from the productions in which a conjectural history is invented *ad hoc* in order to account for actual and observable fact, in which therefore the known and the empirical is "explained" by the imaginary and unknowable.'

Malinowski 1931 : 624 : 'Until the nature of the various cultural phenomena, their function and their form are understood and described more fully, it seems premature to speculate on possible origins and stages... Evolutionary inquiry should therefore be preceded by a functional study of the given culture...'

'The historical (or diffusionist) method uses absence of knowledge as its basis of argument. To be valid its results must be preceded by a functional study of the given culture.'

Malinowski 1960 : 176 (first published in 1944) : 'Functionalism, I would like to state emphatically, is neither hostile to the study of distribution, nor to the reconstruction of past in terms of evolution, history or diffusion. It only insists that unless we define cultural phenomena in function as well as in form, we may be led into...fantastic evolutionary schemes... or to piecemeal treatments of isolated items...'

Malinowski 1945 : 33 : 33-34 and 34 : '...I have attempted to warn against too much hope from mere reconstructional activity, *I would be the last person to underrate the value of historical knowledge*' (emphasis supplied).

'To oppose history and science is futile. To neglect either of them makes humanistic pursuit incomplete.'

'...the so-called functionalism is not and cannot be opposed to the historical approach, but is indeed its necessary complement... I do not see that functionalism and historical reconstructions stand in antithesis.'

Social Structure and Person-to-Person Relations

In his *Elements of Social Organization*, Raymond Firth points out that some anthropologists argue that 'a social structure is the network of all person-to-person relations in a society' (1951 : 30). He considers this definition too wide as 'it makes no distinction between the ephemeral and the more enduring elements in social activity and make it almost impossible to distinguish the idea of the structure of a society to that of a totality of the society itself' (1951 : 30). No names have been mentioned, but obviously Firth had Radcliffe-Brown in mind.

It cannot be denied that Radcliffe-Brown used the term social structure to denote the 'network of actually existing (social) relations' and he also regarded as 'a part of social structure all social relations of person to person' (1932 : 190 and 191). A careful reading of Radcliffe-Brown's writings makes it quite clear that when he spoke of dyadic or person-to-person relations, he did not mean by them those relations which were ephemeral or transitory. He laid due stress on

regularity and repetitiveness. He advised the anthropologist to write down in his field note-books 'the actual relations of Tom, Dick and Harry or the behaviour of Jack and Jill' (1952 : 192). The anthropologist should do it 'in order that I may be able to record as precisely as possible the general or normal form of this relationship abstracted from the variations of particular instances' (Radcliffe-Brown 1952 : 192). Moreover, the concept of person as presented by Radcliffe-Brown cannot be based on ephemeral relations. He insists on distinguishing an individual from a person. To him 'the human being as a person is a complex of social relationships' (1952 : 194).

When one reads his 'The mother's brother in South Africa', one cannot fail to note that, with regard to such relations of person-to-person, established through genealogical connexions, Radcliffe-Brown had positions and roles in mind instead of individuals and their stray acts. He may not have used the term 'critical relations', but he undoubtedly considered the position of the mother's brother as pivotal and his relations to his sister's son critical for the South African social structure. This is what Firth has done in his exposition of the *wali* relationship in Malaya.

While talking about the network of actually existing relations, Radcliffe-Brown did not mean to imply that groups and group-relations were not to be taken note of in the study of a social structure. Commenting on Evans-Pritchard's view of social structure he opined that 'certainly the existence of such persistent groups (as nations, tribes and clans, which retain their continuity, their identity as individual groups, in spite of changes in their membership) is an exceedingly important aspect of structure' (1952 : 191). He cannot be blamed if he wanted to include under the term social structure, 'a good deal more than this'. The following excerpts from his famous essay, 'On social structure' further demonstrate that Radcliffe-Brown would not include only ephemeral and/or person-to-person relations under social structure :

'If we take up the structural point of view, we study...the relations between persons and *groups of persons*' (1952 : 195).

'...structure, (is) a network of relations between persons and *collections of persons*' (1952 : 197-198).

'...The form of a social structure has therefore to be described by the patterns of behaviour to which individuals and *groups* conform in their dealings with one another' (1952 : 198 ; italics supplied in all the cases).

Levi-Strauss has warned us against confusing the concept of social relations with that of social structure. In his opinion, social relations serve as the raw materials for social structure which 'can, by no means, be reduced to the ensemble of the social relations to be described in a given society' (1963 : 279). Radcliffe-Brown cannot be accused of perpetuating this confusion. He has clearly indicated that 'to say we are studying social structures is not exactly the same thing as saying that we study social relations, which is how some sociologists define their subject' (1952 : 191).

Functioning and Having a Function

A building does not have mobility or activity. So a building does not function. But a building serves a purpose, therefore, it has a function. A machine, on the other hand, functions because it operates and has movement. In the context of functioning, the machine is the totality being referred to. The activities of the different parts make us think that the machine functions. The arrangement of the parts in a definite way is a necessary pre-condition for the functioning (or operation) of the machine. Sometimes a part or two may not be in perfect condition, and yet the machine operates ; then we will be correct in saying that the machine functions. But, for some reason, if the machine does not operate, i.e., is not in motion, then it does not function.

When we say that a building (or a machine) has a function, we signify that the building/machine is not itself the totality ; it is only a part of a bigger universe. The contribution which this part (building or machine) makes to the total universe (say, community or factory) is called here its function. Unlike the case of functioning, the item which is said to have a function should necessarily be in some sort of motion or operation.

It is not clear what functions according to Radcliffe-Brown. In one context he talks of 'the functioning of the social structure' (1952 : 180 and 184). At another place 'the functioning of the social system' is referred to (1952 : 181). At yet another place he says that 'an organism may function' (1952 : 182). Quite contrary to it, in the same paper, Radcliffe-Brown has told us that an organism is not a structure, an organism has a structure which is a set of relations between unit entities. It is the units or parts of a whole which operate, act, or, if one likes to say so, function. The function of each unit is to be decided with reference to its relation to the whole. Structure or arrangement is important here. But it does not itself operate. So we cannot say that structure functions.

In Durkheim's definition of function, Radcliffe-Brown replaced 'needs' (besoins) by 'necessary conditions of existence' to avoid 'in particular the possibility of a technological interpretation' (1952 : 178). But he does not clearly tell us what these conditions are. In the case of an organism, one essential condition may be the existence of certain vital organs, like heart, brain and lungs, in a reasonably efficient condition. What are their equivalents in the case of social life? It is obvious that we cannot attribute such pivotal positions to social organization, religious organization, economic or political organization. Malinowski has a definite answer to the query as to what are the necessary conditions of existence. Firstly, the primary needs must be fulfilled and, secondly, human beings must necessarily organize. Thus Malinowski's idea of function requires a concept of organization or structure.

Implications of Organismic Analogy

In transferring the organismic analogy to the social field, Radcliffe-Brown concedes that 'societies do not die in the sense that animals die' (1952 : 182). Societies, then, do not 'live' in the same sense as organisms do. While Radcliffe-Brown has pointed out several limitations of the organismic analogy, he seems also to have overlooked certain important points. The destiny of an organism in its death is pre-determined from the time of its birth. The arrangement of the

organs, i.e., structure of the organism and the organs themselves are given. Further, an organism cannot change its structural type. All these do not apply to society. The result of the activity of an organ is its function in maintaining the life of the organism. Radcliffe-Brown extends it further to imply that the maintenance of the life of the organism amounts to the maintenance of the structure of the organism. It is not true in the case of social life.

The activities of the parts of an organism, within a fixed frame, have to contribute towards the maintenance of the organism. In Radcliffe-Brown's terms, the activities of the organs, arranged in a structure, are necessary for the existence of the organism. The activities of the organs of an animal of a certain species are standardized. One can generalize about the whole species by the study of a few cases. It is not easy—if it is at all possible—to work out a similar standardized list of the aspects of all human societies and cultures, their activities and their resultant functions.

A social whole (or society) is not a close-knit system like an organism. A society has a structure but, unlike that of an organism, a societal structure can undergo change even when there is no revolution, conquest or other social upheaval. Such a change is rooted in the fact that a part of the personnel of a society is recruited afresh in every generation. Through the processes of social learning and enculturation the recruits internalize the basic patterns of culture. But the cognitive maps of the members of the new generation—individually as well as collectively—cannot be identical with those of the older generation. At any particular time, the total personnel of a society consists partly of the new entrants and partly of the old guards. The latter ensure the continuity of the well-established traditions. But the presence of the former provides a built-in source of change.

What has been said above about a society does not hold good for an organism. These points of difference between organic life and social life must not be lost sight of. A lot of confusion has been created due to Radcliffe-Brown's attempt to transfer such ideas as 'the necessary conditions of existence'

and 'the maintenance of the structural continuity' from organic life to social life. Whatever criticisms one may make of Malinowski's functionalism, it is not plagued with the adverse effects of organismic analogy. Malinowski has used expressions like 'organically connected' and 'organic unity.' Through them he emphasized that culture could not be treated as a loose agglomeration of customs and, in turn, a custom could not be torn away from its cultural context. He considered culture a reality *sui generis* and recommended that culture must be studied as such. About the organismic analogy he has clearly stated that 'the various sociologies which treat the subject matter of culture by organic simile or in likeness of a collective mind are irrelevant...' (1931 : 623).

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CHANGING AUTHORITY STRUCTURE IN A BENGAL VILLAGE

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Abstract. Democratic decentralization has brought about a great deal of change in Indian village communities. Emergence of a new kind of factionalism is important among them. Kin-rivalry and feud between the zemindars were age-old practices. Introduction of *panchayati raj* has brought forth a new kind of polarization of power. Traditional authority structure in consonance with the principles of caste system was a hindrance towards the formation of class. Caste played the role of a shock-absorber there. Various social reform movements liberalized caste structures and in some areas weakened its force, thus indirectly promoting the cause of class formation. This has been dealt with by means of illustrations from a Bengal village which, for the purpose of this discussion, has been named Basudha.

Introduction

MANY notable changes have been observed in the political life of Basudha¹ in recent years. The most important of these is the emergence of a new kind of factionalism. Kin-rivalry and feud between zemindars were age-old phenomena in the Indian countryside and Basudha was not an exception in this respect. Introduction of *panchayati raj* system, however, brought forth a new kind of polarization of power. Talking about the *panchayati raj*² programme and the attendant increase in factionalism, a member of the Bagdi caste of Basudha said, 'Still it is good. At least we can place our grievances before the public. Prior to the introduction of *panchayati raj* no one cared to know whether we had anything to say.' His feelings were, to some extent, shared by Dasharath Nayak, a member of the non-zemindar

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Sadgop caste who said, 'It is no good to live in a village where they have a zemindar. You cannot ignore them. You cannot annoy them either. You just have to accept what they do to you.'

The above remarks of individual members of Basudha are shared by a large section of the villagers who are known as *chasi*.³ They consist of the non-zemindar Sadgop and members of other castes of the village. Until recently, as the above remarks indicate, the zemindar of the village enjoyed an unchallenged control over the authority structure of the village. The *morals* (the zemindars are often referred to as *moral*) were the rulers and the *chasi* were the ruled. Although the recent changes brought about by the introduction of *panchayati raj* have not drastically changed this basic pattern of polarization of power, the absolute control of the *moral* over the authority structure of the village does not always go unchallenged. In order to gain a clear understanding of the political life of Basudha it will be useful to discuss in general terms the background of the village and to trace its political history since the zemindar migrated here.⁴

Background of the Village

Basudha is a relatively large village with a population of 1,595. The village is situated in Burdwan, a district in the State of West Bengal, India. The district lies in the south-eastern portion of the vast Gangetic plain that covers most of the areas of West Bengal and Bihar and some parts of Uttar Pradesh. The approximate latitude and longitude of the village are 23°50' North and 87°65' East respectively.

Basudha is inhabited by sixteen Hindu castes, Muslims and also Santals, a tribal community. The available historical record of the village is barely sufficient to give a detailed account of its origin and growth. As far as could be traced, originally the Muslims of a nereby village were the *ayemadar*⁵ of Basudha and the present Sadgop zemindars were their *gumashta*.⁶ At that time there were only three Sadgop families, one Namasudra family, one Bagdi family, one Baishtam family, and one Muslim family in the village. About 350

years ago the Muslim *ayemadar*, because of an internecine quarrel, started selling out property which was bought mostly by their Sadgop *gumashta*. Thus, within a short time the former *gumashta* became the zemindar of the *mauza*⁷ and migrated to Basudha from his original village under Mangalkote Police Station in the same district. This happened about 300 years ago.

When the Sadgop zemindar migrated to Basudha he brought his domestic deity, Dharmaraj, along and established him here. The zemindar set aside about five acres of cultivable land for the maintenance of the Dharmaraj temple and daily worship there. Dharmaraj is still the most important deity of the village and the source of village fiesta.

When the first zemindar family migrated to Basudha there was no Brahmin in the village. As the presence of a Brahmin was indispensable to act as a priest for the daily worship of Dharmaraj, a Brahmin family was brought to Basudha from a neighbouring village under the patronage of the zemindar. This was about 200 years ago. Then followed the migration of service castes such as Napit (BARBER), Kalu (OIL-PRESSER), Karmakar (BLACKSMITH) and Mayara (CONFECTIONER) to Basudha. Castes like Dom and Bauri, who now work as agricultural labourers at Basudha, were also later immigrants. They came both from within the district and from one of the neighbouring districts of Burdwan. The Maghaya Doms, Santals, and Rana-karmakars were the last three groups to arrive. They came from outside the state of West Bengal. While the former two groups now work as agricultural labourers, the Rana-karmakars still follow their caste occupation, which is smithery of iron. Almost all the immigrants came to Basudha under the patronage of the village zemindar.

Basudha may be called a nucleated village.⁸ Most of the houses are huddled together around three sides of a large pond, locally called *dighi*. Trees, orchards and ditches separate the inhabited area from the agricultural fields. There are three wards in the village named according to their location around

the pond. The northern ward is inhabited mainly by members of the Sadgop caste. This is also the seat of the most powerful zemindar of the village.⁹ The eastern ward is inhabited by members of Baishtam, Brahmin, Bagdi, Dom, Napit and Sadgop castes. The other zemindar family lives here. The western ward is mainly occupied by the Bagdi and Muslim. In addition, the Gandha Banik, Namasudra, and some Sadgop families also live here.

As indicated earlier, the population of Basudha can, on the basis of religion, be divided into two groups : the Hindus and the Muslims. There is a third group, the Santals, who have a tribal origin, but despite their independent ritual system they tend to function as members of a lower Hindu caste and declare themselves as Hindus. The Muslims, on the other hand, not only have an independent ritual system, but in many areas of their social and cultural life they function as a distinct group. So they do not fit into the Hindu caste hierarchy.

The Hindus of Basudha are divided into multiple endogamous castes. Although the Muslims differentiate themselves on the basis of aristocracy, they form a more or less homogeneous group as far as their way of life is concerned. Their rules of endogamy and commensality also make the Muslims a distinct group from the Hindus.

On the basis of their respective hierarchical positions, the seventeen Hindu castes of Basudha can be broadly classified into three groups. The upper segment is occupied by the Brahmin, Kayastha, Sadgop, Gandha Banik and Karmakar and the top-most position in the upper segment is occupied by the Brahmins. The Kayasthas occupy the second highest position. Although hierarchically the last three castes occupy the same position, they are quite distinct in other respects. The members of these five castes together are known as *bhadralok* (gentlemen or members of upper castes), in opposition to the lower segment known as *chhotalok* (members of lower castes).

The middle segment is occupied by the Baishtam, Kalu, Mayra and Napit castes. They have rather a marginal¹⁰ position in the hierarchical polarity of the *bhadralok* and

chhotalok. Out of these four castes, the Baishtam occupy the highest position. Kalu, Mayra and Napit are more or less parallel in the caste hierarchy, though otherwise they are quite distinct.

The lower segment is formed by the Sunri, Namasudra, Rana-karmakar, Bagdi, Dom, Bauri and Maghaya Dom castes and the Santals. As stated earlier, the members of these castes are broadly referred to as *chhotalok*. Some of them may be called untouchables in Basudha, that is they are usually not allowed to sit with or touch persons of clean¹¹ castes. Some concessions in this respect are made as far as the members of Sunri and Namasudra castes are concerned. They are not treated as untouchable. However, according to caste rules, they cannot offer drinking water to Brahmins.¹² Among the *chhotalok*, they occupy the topmost position in the caste hierarchy and they are not really looked down upon as much as the members of other *chhotalok* castes. This is partly because the Sunris own substantial landholdings and the Namasudras are well advanced in literacy and also have some landholdings.

The positions occupied by different castes are on the basis of the ceremonial and secular values of the village as a whole. As the values sometimes conflict, there is some possibility of re-grouping the castes in a different set-up. In Basudha, while there is no dispute about grouping castes into the broad categories of *bhadralok* and *chhotalok*, there is a considerable amount of disagreement among the villagers themselves about their respective positions within these categories, particularly within the cluster of *chhotalok*. For example, members of both Bagdi and Dom castes consider each other inferior. However, the general consensus of the village is in favour of the Bagdi caste being superior in status.

The relationship between the *bhadralok* and *chhotalok* is apparently smooth. As the latter group is economically tied up with the former, the *chhotalok* have little scope to express their grievances. As far as the hierarchical position is concerned, the *chhotalok*, however, accept the *bhadralok* as superior to them and remain content with their own inferior

position. This, however, does not totally rule out the possibility of sanskritization¹³ among the lower castes.

Agriculture is the principal basis of economy of the people of Basudha. Though most of the village lands are occupied by the Sadgop zemindar and a great portion of the villagers are landless, the major income derived by the villagers is from agricultural and allied jobs. Those who have sufficient cultivable land usually do only the supervisory work of farming. Those who do not possess land work as farm servants, locally called *munish*¹⁴, either on annual terms or as daily wage-labourers. No matter whether a person works as a farm servant or a share-cropper, to him the landowner is always a *manib*, i. e. master. The *munish* are tied up with their *manib* by a complex nexus of economic relationships. *Byaz*, *dadan*, *pala* and *begar* are important among them.¹⁵

Political Life

When the zemindars migrated to Basudha, by virtue of their control over economic resources, they became all powerful in the village. 'Nothing could happen here without their knowledge or approval. You could not even have a pond dug unless the zemindar approved of it,' said Pashupati Ghosh, an elderly member of the village. Though his statement was not entirely unprejudiced, there are sufficient reasons to believe that the zemindar of Basudha enjoyed an unchallenged authority in the region.

During British regime, as part of the local self-government, when Union Boards were formed, Basudha became the seat of a Union Board and a zemindar of this village became its President. One member of the same zemindar family remained in that position for thirty consecutive years. After independence, the Community Development Programme was launched in 1952 and later the *panchayati raj* system was introduced in this area in 1959 to invite people's participation in the programme. In West Bengal, the *panchayati raj* took the form of a four-tier system—the *zilla parishad* (district council) at the top, the *gram panchayat* (village council) at the bottom, and the *anchalik parishad* (regional council) and *anchal*

panchayat (block council) in the middle. Interestingly enough, three members (cousins) from the same zemindar family of Basudha occupied the three top-most positions of the *anchalik parishad*, *anchal panchayat*, and *gram panchayat*. Though in all these three structures, there were representatives from different castes or religious groups, and from different walks of life, this was an example of extreme centralization of power. However, the passage to this centralization of power was not smooth.

In May, 1958, the *gram panchayat* was formed in Basudha on an experimental basis and all the eleven members of that body were unanimously chosen. These eleven members elected from among themselves a zemindar who had no connexion with the prevailing local self-government, as the *adhyaksha* (Chairman) of the village council and an educated villager as the *upadhyaksha* (Vice-Chairman). This elected body worked for one year. The next election for the formation of statutory *panchayat* was held on July 8, 1959. In this statutory body there were nine positions. In a unanimous decision of the villagers, three members were selected from each of the three wards of the village to fill in those positions. At the time of initial formation of the experimental *panchayat*, however, no attention had been paid to the representativeness of the ward-organization of the village.

Before the introduction of the *panchayati raj*, Basudha was a part of the Guskara Union Board, and Shaktipada Ghosh of Basudha was its President. As he had set up a few commercial and industrial establishments at Guskara he moved there with his family. Consequently, the headquarters of the Union Board was also shifted to Guskara. As Shaktipada Ghosh would rarely visit Basudha, one of his cousins, Umesh Ghosh, became the leader of the village. In fact, he was the *de facto* leader of Basudha even when Shaktipada Ghosh was here, as the latter, being the President of the Union Board of Guskara, would mostly remain busy with the extra-village affairs.

When *panchayati raj* was first introduced, neither Shaktipada Ghosh nor Umesh Ghosh was fully aware of

its implications. Further, as the Union Board continued to function during the experimental *gram panchayat* period, neither of them took any interest in joining the new body.

The experimental *gram panchayat* of Basudha was headed by Dinabandhu Mandal, a member of the other zemindar family of the village. When it was decided to form the statutory *panchayat*, both Shaktipada Ghosh and Umesh Ghosh became interested in joining the new organization. Shaktipada Ghosh aspired for the position of *pradhan* of the *anchal panchayat*, which was a parallel position to the President of the Union Board, and Umesh Ghosh aspired for the position of *adhyaksha* of the *gram panchayat*. But Dinabandhu Mandal, the earlier occupant of the position, was reluctant to quit the position that he had been occupying for one year. So the situation became a bit complicated as it involved the two zemindar families of the village. It got worse when Gopeswar Ghosh (an Honours graduate and a teacher of Guskara Higher Secondary School), another cousin of Shaktipada Ghosh, who was also the Vice-President of the Union Board, aspired for the position of the *pradhan*. Thus, there were two candidates for each of the positions of *pradhan* and *adhyaksha*, and all of them were representatives of one or the other zemindar family of Basudha.

When a contest among the zemindars became inevitable, Tinkari Pal, a dissatisfied non-zemindar Sadgop and a member of the village council, became active and wanted to snatch away power from the hands of the village zemindar. He, with the help of Gunadhar Roy, a Kayastha of the village and a member of the Communist Party of India¹⁶, organized a party called *Chashi* party (Farmers' party) and decided to take advantage of the situation. Soon they were joined by two other influential villagers, Pashupati Ghosh and Harihar Mandal. Ghosh and Mandal were not zemindars and belonged to the Sadgop caste. Both of them were members of the experimental village council. But when the statutory *gram panchayat* was formed their names were dropped from the membership of the village council.

We have already said that at the time of the formation of the experimental village council, the selection of representatives was arbitrary as no attention was paid to the ward-organization of the village. As a result, in the experimental village council, there were as many as six representatives from one ward. When it was decided to have an equal number of representatives from each ward of the village, there were only three positions for the northern ward from which there had been six representatives. Further, in order to make a seat for Umesh Ghosh, the *de facto* leader of the village and a member of the zemindar family, some members of the previous experimental village council were dropped from the statutory village council. This made them very dissatisfied and they took it as an act of personal insult. As most of them had personal grievances against the zemindar they made him their target of attack. Pashupati Ghosh was extremely bitter about it, as before the abolition of the zemindari system, he was refused permission by the village zemindar to excavate a pond in the village for raising fish. He was already looking for a chance to take revenge. So, when his name was dropped from the list of members of the village council, he became virulent and extended his unalloyed support to the *Chashi* party.

Soon Nemai Haldar, another non-zemindar member of Sadgop caste joined the party. He attended a meeting where a top communist leader of the state spoke. He was so influenced by the speech that he decided to join the *Chashi* party in order to dislodge the zemindar from power. These few individuals formed the nucleus and started their campaign against the zemindar. They made secret contacts with the impoverished *chhotalok* of the village and raised a slogan against the *begar* (obligatory unpaid labour) system. This tremendously moved the *chhotalok* as most of them were affected by this system. Soon a large number of them stopped rendering *begar* service and joined the *Chashi* party. Within a very short time the village became divided into two major factions—the *Moral* party of the zemindar and the *Chashi* party of those opposed to the zemindar.

Pashupati Ghosh, who became very active in his campaign against the *moral* explained to the *chhotalok*, 'During the British regime the *moral* supported the then British government and thus humiliated our national heroes like Subhash Chandra Bose and Chittaranjan Das. Now we have achieved independence and the *morals* have overnight changed their role. Now they are supporters of the Congress Party. They are cheats and cannot be trusted.' He further added, '*Chhotalok* are poor as the *morals* want them to remain poor. They do not want the poor to become literate and be emancipated. So they opposed the proposal of setting up a High School in the village.'¹⁷ This has a tremendous impact upon the villagers and most of the *chhotalok* formed a negative opinion about the *moral*. The solidarity of the *Chashi* party increased when Gunadhar Roy promised to give agricultural land to the landless villagers provided they supported the *Chashi* party in the village election.

The members of the *moral* group were not at first aware of these developments. They came to realize the weight of the *Chashi* party when in a budget discussion regarding the annual Dharmaraj worship Pashupati Ghosh raised a protest and left the meeting with a large number of followers. This was unprecedented in the history of Basudha.

When the *morals* realized the situation they quickly patched up the differences among themselves. Dinabandhu Mandal decided to withdraw his name from the race and extended support to Umesh Ghosh. In the *anchal panchayat* election also Shaktipada Ghosh withdrew his name in favour of Gopeswar and decided to compete instead for the presidency of the *anchalik parishad*. Thus the *morals* became united and launched their election campaign.

In their election campaign the *morals* at first emphasized the unity of the village. Where this did not work they exerted economic pressure on the people. In one of his speeches Umesh Ghosh explained, 'Basudha has a good name in this region as the village is united. When people talk of an ideal village, they talk of Basudha. It is a matter of prestige for every villager. Should we jeopardize this good name by creating

factions amongst ourselves?' As this did not have much impact on the people, the *morals* exerted economic pressure. Most of the Santal, Bauri and Dom families were economically dependent on the *morals*. Naturally, as a result of this pressure, they had to withdraw support from the *Chashi* party. The Bagdi, who had comparatively less economic connexions with the *moral*, decided to stay with the *Chashi* group.

The last tool the *morals* decided to use was to withdraw water-supply facilities from the members of the *Chashi* party and their followers. As all the village ponds belonged to the *morals*, the members and followers of the *Chashi* party found themselves in great difficulty. At this point the village factionalism took a serious turn towards physical violence. Realizing this the *morals* restrained themselves from exerting the pressure fully. Instead, they started litigation against members of the *Chashi* party. As a retaliatory action the *chashi* also did the same and within a short while the villagers became involved in multiple law-suits, some of which are still going on.

The Muslim villagers at first tried to remain neutral. But due to economic pressure, most of them had to support the the zemindar. As a consequence of this factionalism most of the Hindu castes, the Santals and the Muslims became divided into two groups.

The *Chashi* party did not propose any candidates for the positions of *anchalik parisad* and *anchal panchayat*, as they did not have any organization beyond the village level. They concentrated all their efforts on the election of *adhyaksha* of the *gram panchayat*.

Though the *morals* were pleading for unanimity all through their election campaign, a contest became inevitable and took the turn of a prestige fight between the *Moral* and *Chashi* party. To avoid clashes, some members of the zemindar families were insisting that Sadhan Bazar, the nominee of the *Chashi* party, withdraw his name from the contest. At that time the majority of the members of the village council were supporting Sadhan Bazar. So he remained firm in his decision to contest. When Umesh Ghosh, the *moral* candidate, came to know about

it, he became furious. At first he tried to persuade Sadhan Bazar to withdraw his name. When this failed Umesh Ghosh personally insulted him by saying, 'The *moral* brought you to Basudha and now you want to rule them. How dare you do that? Being a non-zemindar you want to rule the zemindar.' Sadhan Bazar felt very much offended at this and this made him more firm in his decision to contest the seat of the *adhyaksha*. Then Umesh Ghosh tried to win the support of the *chhotalok* and Muslim members of the village council by making economic concessions to them. This enabled him to bag support of one of the two *chhotalok* members and the Muslim member. Though this made him almost certain about his victory, Umesh Ghosh still insisted on unanimity in the election of *adhyaksha* as, being a zemindar, he felt it humiliating to contest with a non-zemindar. When all the efforts of Umesh Ghosh failed, Shaktipada Ghosh intervened and was successful in removing Sadhan Bazar from the contest.

Shaktipada Ghosh was closely related to Sadhan Bazar through marriage. So when he requested Sadhan Bazar to withdraw his name the latter agreed. He did it for two reasons. Firstly, he did not want to make the richest man of the village his enemy by antagonizing him. Secondly, when some of his supporters crossed the floor and the chance of his victory became slim, he thought it would be unwise to get involved in the clash. Thus, at last the *adhyaksha* of Basudha was elected without any contest. But when the election was over there was no attempt to patch up the differences between the *Moral* party and the *Chashi* party.

Though the *Chashi* party could not push their candidate through the village election they did not give up their political activities. As a result, when any new organization is set up in the village both the *Moral* party and *Chashi* party contest for occupying power. Consequently, long after the 1959 village election, Basudha has remained divided into two factions.

On the basis of their observation of political and social change in India, many scholars have commented on the growth of factionalism in Indian villages. McCormack notes the contrast between the traditional village social system in which

'...castes constituted the major groups within the village and only a single allegiance was possible, and the present faction system where dual allegiance to the interest-sharing groups is not only possible but common.'¹⁸ He attributes the growth of factionalism to the disintegration of the traditional economic system and the increase in direct governmental interference in village affairs. Our observation in Basudha partly confirms this view. We have seen how the election system of village officials, along with certain other factors that were previously unknown in Indian village communities, have contributed substantially to the growth of factionalism.

Concluding Remarks

Traditional authority structure in consonance with the caste system was a hindrance towards the formation of class¹⁹ in rural India. Caste played the role of shock-absorber there. A close examination of the social structure of Basudha reveals that polarization is the main theme round which the socio-economic life of the villagers revolves. Socially, the village of Basudha is divided into two, the *bhadralok* and the *chhotalok*, and the economic divisions are *manib* and *munish*. Through a broader perspective the social divisions generally coincide with the economic divisions. Existence of such distinct identifiable groups presupposes a social background which is highly conducive to the formation of class. But, as indicated earlier, the *munish* being fully dependent on the *manib* economically, could hardly grumble the authority of the latter. Similarly ascriptive positions of a hierarchical nature occupied by various castes were rationalized by the *karma*-concept and let it go unchallenged for a considerably long time. In recent days various social reform movements weakened the forces of caste and thus promoted the cause of class formation.²⁰ Exposure to various such movements of the different Hindu castes and the welfare programmes of the nation-state brought about a great deal of change in the outlook of the people. This became evident, specially as a result of the introduction of the *panchayati raj* system that distributed power to the people. Consequently, some members from among the *chhotalok* started questioning

the authenticity of the division of society on the basis of ascriptive positions. Economic divisions were not accepted by the people under divine sanction any more. Thus, social mobility sometimes followed by economic mobility, became inevitable and in this process the greater the resistance they met the stronger became the solidarity of the group. These coupled with the imported thoughts of political philosophers have led to the formation of class.

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1. The names of the village and villagers are fictitious.
2. A new system of village government instituted by the state administration in 1958 in order to decentralize power and authority. The governing unit of the village is known as *gram panchayat*.
3. A Bengali word which means peasant. Here the word is used to mean non-zemindar of the village.
4. As the authority structure of the village has a direct bearing upon its social structure we will describe the village in some detail in order to give a broad outline of its social structure.
5. Muslim scholars who were rewarded tax-free land by Muslim rulers in recognition of their merit in preaching and scholarship.
6. Originally a Persian word largely used in Bengali. It means rent-collector.
7. An Arabic word, literally means village. A *mauza* refers to a habitation area and its surrounding cultivable lands.
8. A village that has a central settlement area surrounded by agricultural fields.
9. At present there are two zemindar families at Basudha.
10. Here the word marginal has been used in a somewhat broad sense. The two groups, *bhadralok* and *chhotalok*, are not necessarily antagonistic, though they occupy the opposite poles of a continuum. Compare Park, Robert E., 1937 : XIII-XVIII.
11. The nature of clean and unclean castes is determined partially by the food-habits of the people concerned. If one eats certain kinds of food, he is always capable of rendering the food and water of upper caste Hindus impure. As his very touch is detrimental to the purity of upper caste Hindus, he is treated as unclean.
12. It is on the basis of this rule that the Hindu castes, particularly of Bengal, are divided into *jalchal* and *jalachal* castes. Those who can offer drinking water to a Brahmin are called *jalchal*, and those from whom a Brahmin cannot accept water, as it is defiled by their touch, are called *jalachal*.
13. See Srinivas, M. N., 1956 : 481-496.
14. This is a composite word that means a farm-servant who works as a wage-labourer, seasonal labourer, or a regular farm-servant. Though there

are separate words to indicate regular farm-servants who work on fixed terms for the whole year, often the villagers use the word *munish* while referring to them.

15 For a detailed description of these relationships see Danda, Ajit Kumar and Dipali Ghosh Danda, 1968 : 82-105.

16. At present he is a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

17. The zemindar opposed the idea for two reasons. They were not willing to donate any land for the school premises. They also wanted to upgrade the primary school up to a Basic School where importance would lie on vocational training.

18. See McCormack, William, 1959 : 440.

19. Class has been defined and envisaged in a number of ways by various authors leading to the creation of a great deal of confusion. In order to avoid any ambiguity throughout the essay the word class has been used more or less in accordance with the definition of Dahrendorf (1959 : 76).

20. Here our observation differs from that of Bete'ille according to whom class system which once overlapped with caste system has gradually been dissociating itself from the caste structure (1966 : 199). We are inclined to think that caste system is basically different from the class system the emergence of which in India countryside is rather a recent phenomenon.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE JENU KURUBAS

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Abstract. In the present paper an attempt has been made to analyse why a particular community which is as at a low economic level has failed to grasp the advantages of the developmental schemes initiated by the Government.

BOTH State and Central Governments are committed to the welfare of the tribes and for that it has been felt necessary to improve their economy. Wherever the development of other trades has not been possible, the Governments have tried to develop agriculture among them. Under such schemes the tribals are given tax-free land, bullocks, improved agricultural implements, seeds and the expert assistance of modern agricultural know-how, all free of cost. They are also given cash awards and certain incentives to promote agricultural development. Sometimes, well-conceived exhibitions are arranged to show to the tribals the benefit of modernized farming. Yet in many of the scheduled tribal areas the result has been far from satisfactory. There can be a variety of reasons for not obtaining satisfactory results. In this paper, I have tried to analyse why a particular community, which is at a very low economic level, has failed to grasp the advantages of the schemes initiated by the Government. This I shall do with reference to a tribe called the Jenu Kuruba, living near Begur

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village, Heggaddavankote taluk, Mysore district (India) among whom I carried on a field-work for about three months.¹

The Jenu Kurubas, a scheduled tribe, are mostly found in the forest area of the southern districts of Mysore State. However, their main concentration is in the forests of the districts of Mysore and Coorg. They either live at the fringe or in the interior of forests.

The Jenu Kurubas, as their name implies, are traditionally known as honey collectors. They mainly made their living by food gathering. Though the Jenu Kurubas are forest dwellers, they seem to have been poor hunters. Today, one does not find with them any hunting weapon worth the name or animal trapping devices. They also practised shifting cultivation. That is, in the past, the Jenu Kurubas subsisted by honey collection, food gathering, shifting cultivation and whatever little hunting they could do. Now, however, the situation is changed. Forests have been protected. No shifting cultivation is allowed. The lure of the land has brought other communities with a long tradition of farming near the forests and most of the land just beyond the forest area belongs to them. This has come to them through years of effort by manipulating the revenue records or as a repayment of the meagre loans they gave to the Jenu Kurubas or other tribals living in the area. However, according to the present governmental rules, no further encroachment in the forest is possible, nor can any land cultivated by any tribe be transferred to a non-tribal. These regulations have been brought in partly to protect the forests and partly to safeguard the interests of the tribals—but the rules came into being when alienation had already taken place. Very little cultivable land is now left for them and certainly none for further expansion. For on one side are the forests where no further encroachment is possible and on the other are the fields of other communities. Now perhaps on account of the exploitation of the forests for various purposes and so many people living around the forest area, the forests are not that rich in edible roots and fruits as they used to be.

All these have left the Jenu Kurubas in particular in a precarious condition. At present, there are only a few alternatives before them. One is to work on daily wages in forests² or in the fields of other communities. The Jenu Kurubas are skilled in working in the jungle and are preferred by both the Forest Department and by private contractors. Other communities do not prefer a Jenu Kuruba as a worker in their fields and a Jenu Kuruba also does not feel quite at home in working with them. The second alternative before Jenu Kurubas is to till the land which some of them still retain. Today, most of the Jenu Kurubas in the Begur area depend upon the daily wages they earn by working in forests and those who possess land supplement their income by tilling their lands besides collecting whatever edible roots and fruits they can from the forests.

Here, I shall introduce the Betta Kurubas, another community which lives in the neighbourhood of the Jenu Kurubas. The Betta Kurubas are also a scheduled tribe and forest dwellers. Though they live in close proximity to the Jenu Kurubas, they do not face a grim economic situation as the Jenu Kurubas do. Immediately the question comes to the mind, why is it so when the two tribes have been living in an identical situation for years and the economic opportunities also are the same? How is this that one group exploits those opportunities more than the other? Sinha (1963) observes that the people of Barabhum exhibit a wide range of variation in economic initiative, and that a notable correspondence exists between ethnic affiliation and level of economic initiative. This relevant finding, however, does not explain why there are different levels of economic initiative among different groups of people living almost in an identical situation. Is there any relationship between economic initiative, personality and the social structure of a group? This I propose to discuss here, but only briefly.

It is an observed fact that the Jenu Kurubas lack the economic initiative of the Betta Kurubas. The latter have established themselves as expert bamboo basket-makers. They

live in compact settlements (*hadi*) based on close kin ties. In the centre of every Betta Kuruba settlement, there is a large thatched shed commonly used by all the inmates of the settlement for personal and community needs. The life of the Betta Kurubas is very much marked by the 'We'-feeling and strong community life. Marriages are generally arranged by the parents of boys and girls and the entire marriage rituals are systematically performed with the co-operation of all the members of the settlement, near kin and prominent members of the neighbouring settlements. Marriage and other ceremonial occasions are marked by communal cooking and feasting. Whenever a Betta Kuruba fulfils a religious vow (*harike*), all the members of the settlement participate in it and it is followed by a feast. The Betta Kurubas have a strong council of their own. The jurisdiction of the Betta Kuruba council comprises several of their settlements. The leaders of the council and the headman of each settlement have certain authority and roles to play. Economically, the Betta Kurubas are no more dependent upon food gathering. They take keen interest in agriculture and cultivate whatever land they possess and they also go in for wage-earning in the forests. Along with these they pursue their traditional occupation of basket-making. Men and women both are adept in it. On several occasions I saw the Betta Kuruba men and women engaged in basket-making till late in the night.

In contrast to the Betta Kurubas, the Jenu Kurubas are in the process of emerging out of the forests, so to say. Their settlements (*hadi*) are very much unlike that of the Betta Kurubas. Their settlements are generally scattered—at times a hamlet may be a furlong away from the other. The membership of the settlement remains in a flux on account of frequent migration of the people from one settlement to another. These migrations take place for a variety of reasons; such as, search of subsistence, quarrels due to some irregular union between a man and a woman and elopement of a couple. That is, the ties with the settlement they live in are feeble, which they can snap at any time. Close kin ties are at best found

mainly among the inmates of the hamlets. The 'We'-feeling in terms of the settlement or the group as a whole is almost absent. Co-operation is marked only within the nuclear family, otherwise their life seems to be characterized by 'everyone for his own self'. The Jenu Kuruba marriages generally take place by elopement giving little chance for any group activity. Their marriages by elopement seem to derive from their attitude to move away from opposition or hostilities. A new household is born soon after a boy elopes with a girl. The custom prohibits a Jenu Kuruba from taking cooked food either at his married son's or married daughter's residence. In other words, interaction between the members of an extended family is little. The few rituals Jenu Kurubas observe on birth, marriage and death are confined to the household. In a religious vows (*harike*) in contrast to the Betta Kurubas, only those members of the household who have taken the religious vow participate and not the members of one's extended family or of the settlement. The mechanism of social control is weak. The Jenu Kurubas do not have any council of their own. Leaders, if there are any, have very little say in the affairs of others. Problems are solved on the individual level by withdrawing from a conflict situation.

I may cite here a case in which a widow of about 40 married her brother's daughter's husband's brother who was about 16. The woman had three children from her earlier husband. Her eldest son was married and lived in the same settlement. Her brother also lived there. The boy she married lived with his widowed mother, but after this marriage the mother lived with her brother. This particular marriage was not liked by the kin of both the sides, but they did nothing to prevent them from living together. They all hated this woman and desired that the woman should leave the boy, but they never directly interfered in the matter, though after sometime the boy and the woman frequently quarrelled among themselves. In the meantime she gave birth to a daughter. One day the boy beat this woman and ran away from the settlement. She did not approach any one of her community, including her kin living in the settlement, but went to a prominent man of the neighbouring village. She wanted that her

husband should be brought to her and punished for the ill treatment he had given to her. The boy never returned. The whole issue was slowly forgotten.

Economically, the Jenu Kurubas at present are suffering from abject poverty. Unlike the Betta Kurubas, the Jenu Kurubas do not practise any subsidiary occupation which can stabilize their economy in the changed circumstances. Gardner (1966) describes a common type of food-gathering people, living in close proximity to powerful neighbours (here advanced Hindu castes and other groups), the social structure of whom is based upon non-co-operation and non-competition and individualism in the ideational sphere. Further, taking the cue from psychoanalysts, Gardner suggests 'Subject to chronic domination these refugee peoples have defended themselves by withdrawing emotionally and geographically. That is, they withdraw when possible and are submissive when contact is inevitable. (1966, 408.) This is of direct relevance here. The Jenu Kurubas show most of the traits of the common food-gatherers and their attitude of withdrawing, an aspect of their personality with its correlates in their social structure, explains the lack of economic initiative among them—they are still emerging from the forests.

With this background in view, I shall now proceed to discuss the occupation of agriculture among the Jenu Kurubas living near Begur village and the efforts of the State Government to improve it. There are two settlements of the Jenu Kurubas called Maldhadi and Amtehadi near Begur village. These two settlements consist in all of about thirty-one households. Of these only about forty-eight per cent possess land, on an average of four acres per household. That is, more than half of the households have no land and there is no possibility also for these households to acquire any land now in that area for reasons explained earlier. In other words, if the Jenu Kurubas continue to live in the area under discussion, the benefits of agricultural development, whatever they are, would reach only less than fifty per cent of the people. However, let us see how even this percentage of the people fares as regards agriculture.

The important requisite for agriculture is sustained and hard manual work for a period of six to seven months, besides good seeds, water and manure. Some more time is required between the time the crop is ripe in the fields and when it is ready for human consumption. The main crops of the area are *ragi* (*Elusine coracana*) and rice. The Jenu Kurubas generally grow *ragi* which is their staple food.

None of the Jenu Kurubas cultivated more than two acres of land at one time for the reason which would become clear later. However, the minimum requirement for the sustained agricultural work of one full cycle of cultivation on a land of two acres is that of two adult hands. More labour is required at the time of harvestting, threshing, cleaning and storing the yield. If they cultivate more land they would require more hands. In this context the composition of the households of the Jenu Kurubas and their individualistic approach towards life is to be kept in view. The Jenu Kuruba households generally consist of nuclear families, and thus the adult workers available in a household are that of husband and wife only. In only one case it was observed that a married son with his wife jointly worked on the fields of his father. On account of their individualism, they do not extend help to each other when more labour is required, nor do they have money enough to hire labour and the result is that all of them lack the requisite number of workers, at least, at the time of harvesting, threshing and storing.

As regards sparing two adult workers for agricultural work for six to seven months, that in itself is a problem. The Jenu Kurubas subsist upon day-to-day earnings. They do not have enough edibles to store; even if they have at any time, they do not have proper facilities to store them. If two main bread earners of a household get engaged in agricultural work for six to seven months without any surplus to fall back upon they cannot survive. Thus, on the labour question itself, it is noticed that the Jenu Kurubas cannot do agricultural work continuously, let alone their non-co-operativeness and non-competitiveness.

The Jenu Kurubas solve this problem by giving marginal attention to agriculture, which may also be due to the force of shifting cultivation tradition. The Jenu Kurubas allow weeds and plants to grow in their fields and as the sowing season approaches they fell the growth on as much land as they can hurriedly attend to, burn it, scratch the land with a digging stick or a plough (acquired recently) and broadcast whatever seeds they can spare. Sparing enough seeds for sowing is a problem in itself; but in the past on a few occasions the Government supplied seeds to them. I am told that whatever was supplied to them was not sown, which seems to be quite natural. One cannot remain hungry while some edible grains are being used in this manner. However, after sowing they leave it to nature and they go in for daily wage-earning work. Afterwards, when the crop is ready, they harvest it in instalments. This much of attention to agriculture helps them to continue their daily wage-earning work and collect whatever crop they are able to grow. The crop thus collected is good enough for them for about two months and that is a prosperous period for the Jenu Kurubas. During this period, instead of working hard in the forest and earning daily wages and building up some reserve capital, the Jenu Kurubas take some time off from their daily wage-earning work. That is, whether they had a good or bad crop they start their agricultural season every year almost in the same economic position. Thus as the conditions prevail today the Jenu Kurubas, on account of their non-co-operation and non-competition, individualism in the ideational sphere, and lack of reserve capital, remain poor agriculturists. These are incompatible with the demands of development of agriculture. It may also be pointed out here that just promoting cultivation on an acre or two would not do for them. Their requirements can hardly be met by the produce obtainable from one to two acres of land. According to my day-to-day enquiry with four households for about a month, the daily requirement of *ragi* alone for a household consisting of five persons is roughly 3.5 kg besides rice, pulse, salt, spices, tobacco, betel leaf, betel nut and clothes. That is, the minimum requirement of *ragi* for an average

household is about twelve quintals per year. Average yield of *ragi* obtainable in that area is about five *pallas* (a *palla* is about 104 kg) per acre. That means they have to seek some additional sources for obtaining food and meeting other requirements. Thus, in order to meet their immediate demands of livelihood, apart from the factors stated earlier, Jenu Kurubas go in for daily-wage earning which, however, does not improve their economy.

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1. I have ignored the quantitative aspect of the help given by the State Government to the tribals in this paper ; for in the first place, I could not acquire data as to how much and how many times the tribals got help from the Government. Secondly, my concern here is mainly with the nature of help.
2. Mysore district forests are rich in bamboo, and every season the Government leases out bamboo forests to private contractors. There private contractors require labourers to cut down bamboo and transport them. There are other kinds of work in the forest, such as felling trees and planting seedlings etc. A Jenu Kuruba gets Rs.1.50 and a Jenu Kuruba woman Re.1.00 as daily wages for working in the forest.

SOCIAL MOBILITY MOVEMENT AMONG THE RABHA OF NORTH BENGAL

BIKASH RAYCHAUDHURI

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Abstract : The Rabha, a matriarchal people of North Bengal, living in close proximity to the Hindus, gradually adopted some of the Hindu observances. With the awakening of the sense of social prestige, they tried to raise their position to the status of Sudra within the Hindu-fold, through a series of movements. In the following pages, this has been traced from 1930 to 1963, though it must be noted that it passed through a number of set-backs at times in which economic and special constitutional privileges played no inconsiderable role.

Introduction

The Rabha are a little known tribe, mainly concentrated in in the Goalpara district of Assam, from where they had migrated to different districts of West Bengal, a few generations ago. Their number in West Bengal, according to the 1961 Census, is 6053, out of which about 56 per cent are in Jalpaiguri and about 12 are in Cooch Behar district.

Field investigation was carried out during 1963-64. The four villages, namely, Madhya Kamakshyaguri and Dakshin Kamakshyaguri within P. S. Kumargram of Dt. Jalpaiguri and Barasalbari and Chengtimari under P. S. Tufanganj of Dt. Cooch Behar, were studied in detail. Besides these other adjacent villages were visited to supplement the data.

Social Background

The Rabhas were in the past a full-fledged matrilineal tribe (Friend—Pareira 1911). But due to contact with neighbouring

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patrilineal societies their social pattern has undergone a good deal of change. Today they still follow matrilineal descent ; but inheritance of property is traced from father to son.

In the Goalpara district of Assam, there are some endogamous divisions, namely, Rangdania, Pati, Maitaria, Daburi, Kachari, Totla, etc. (Gait 1891 ; Endle 1911 ; Das 1955, 1958) of the tribe. But these divisions are not found in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. In the latter areas the entire group is named as Rabha, who are divided into a number of totemic exogamous matrilineal clans. They do, however, not only strictly practise clan exogamy, sometimes the principle of exogamy may be extended to a group of clans.

Rabha society was exposed to a great social movement around 1347 B.S. (1940) toward Hinduism. This social mobility movement of 1347 B. S. is of great significance in the social and cultural life of the tribe in North Bengal. Even before making any organized effort toward identification as a Hindu caste due to their close contact with the neighbouring Hindus, many educated members of the tribe followed many Hindu observances like *Ekadasi*, *Purnima*, *Durgapuja*, etc. *Tulsi* (basil) plant has also become auspicious in some Rabha families.

First Movement

The organized movement of the Rabhas took a concrete shape around 1930. It first started in the village of Bharea in the P.S. Tufanganj, which had a superior position in the tribal society, as it was inhabited by some tribal leaders like Debu Chand Rabha. In the multi-caste village of Bharea regular *bhajan* songs were organized in *harisabha* (temple of the Lord Hari) by various Hindu castes. But the Rabhas had no entry into it and they felt humiliated. Once a saint, named Sri Bhabendra Nath Chaudhuri, was present in one such *harisabha* where he opposed the social convention which was so humiliating to the Rabhas. Further he was of the opinion that the Rabhas were Hindu and they had every right to receive the services of the Brahmins and BARBERS. Some of the

literate Rabha leaders were thus stimulated to organize a meeting then and there and it was resolved that :

- (i) The Rabhas should get the status of the Sudra.
- (ii) They should give up drinking liquor and rearing pigs and fowl.
- (iii) They should get the surname Sarania.

Ten out of twenty-five families of Bharea 'purified' themselves with the help of Bhabendra Nath around 1935. But the difficulty was in securing *Adhikari*, Brahmin and BARBER, for in those days different castes had their respective *Adhikari*, Brahman and BARBER. So one Hepak Rabha was initiated by Sri Bhabendra Nath himself and was raised to the status of the *Adhikari* of the Rabhas and a BARBER was secured from Assam ; but it was not possible to get the service of a Brahmin priest. The after-effect of this move was not very promising. The Rabhas of Barasalbari (P. S. Tufanganj) and Kamakhyaguri (P. S. Kumargram), who are numerically stronger, declined to accept the converts in their society and the Rajbanshis, whom the Rabhas are imitating, and the other Hindu castes also refused to accept them as Hindu. Moreover, the Rabhas, in general, were poor and were dependent on the Rajbanshis. The latter do not rear pigs or fowl due to their social custom. They gave them to the Rabhas for rearing and got their stipulated shares. On becoming 'purified', that source of earning was closed. The Rajbanshis also became deprived of the special arrangement when the Rabhas refused to rear pigs and fowl. It was possibly due to this that the other Rabhas and Rajbanshis opposed it. Consequently eight out of ten Rabha families left Hinduism within two years of their first purification and went back to their age-old customs.

The Second Movement

After a lull of about five or six years, the movement received a momentum around 1940 (1347 B. S.) under the initiative of a Brahmin, named Sri Dhaneswar Bhattacharya, a social reformer. He came to know that the Rabhas around

Kamakshyaguri and Barasalbari may adopt Hinduism if properly approached; otherwise they would embrace Christianity under the influence of missionaries. Consequently, Sri Bhattacharya discussed the matter with the Rabhas of Kamakshyaguri and Barasalbari and proclaimed that the Rabhas were Hindus. In their discussion two vital problems were raised.

- (i) If they would accept Hinduism, other Rabhas might not accept them in their society.
- (ii) Even if they accepted Hinduism, other Hindus might not accept them due to their previous lower position.

So it was resolved that a formal written consent from the Pandits* of the Court of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar should be secured to ensure that the Rabhas were a part and parcel of Hindu society, and as such they should be accepted within the Hindu fold. After a long discussion, Sri Bhattacharya succeeded in getting a formal written prescription from the Head Pandit, Sri Madana Smritiratna. The latter gave the consent as follows :—‘The Rabha and Garo are Hindus. When Parashuram was indiscriminately killing the Kshatriyas, they (Rabha and Garo) took shelter in the hills. There they were leading a nomadic life and were taking food uncommon to the Hindus. As such if they could purify themselves by performing *yajna* according to Hindu rites, when they should be accepted in Hindu society and their water should be accepted by the Hindus of lower status like Rajbanshis.’

Accordingly a date for purificatory ceremony was fixed. All the villagers were asked to be present on the appointed day at a fixed place and time. On the appointed day they gathered in Barasalbari (Buchamari) and the following resolutions§ were passed in the meeting :

In the village of Barasalbari, P. S. Tufanganj, Cooch Behar State we, the following villagers, have decided in a meeting that

- (1) within one month from this day we shall give up pork, chicken and liquor and enter into the Hindu community

* In North Bengal the Pandits of the Court of the Maharaja of Cooch Bihar are throughout to be sole authorities to give the formal prescription on any social affair.

§ Literal translation of the original Bengali manuscript is given here.

according to the *Shastras*. From this day we shall perform all the rites and ceremonies according to the *Shastras*. From now we shall not perform the rites connected with death and marriage and other ceremonies as we did so long. We shall practise the manners and customs of the Sudras of the Hindu community and receive (the services of) Brahmin priests and BARBERS.

- (2) Our original custom that the daughter would inherit the property of the father is detestable ; so we decide together that the son shall inherit the father's property. For this a petition has to be submitted to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, so that the son might be accepted as the successor of the father's property instead of the daughter.
- (3) In obedience to the injunction of our religious preceptor, we shall construct one *Harimandir* (a house for the worship of the deity Hari and for the assembly of the devotees to sing religious songs in the name of Hari) in a convenient place in every village. Every month, once or more than once, as occasion arises, we shall assemble in that *Harimandir* and hold discourse on religious matters. We shall obey all the precepts of the *Shastras* in matters connected with religion and in this we shall follow what our preceptor tells us to do.
- (4) If there is a quarrel or difference of opinion among ourselves, we shall bring in our preceptor and have it decided (or compromised). In all matters we shall follow the order (advice) of the preceptor. We shall not do anything against his orders.
- (5) We shall accept the Brahmin, whom the preceptor selects as our priest. When necessity arises, he shall arrange for a BARBER. In obedience to his instruction, we shall accept BARBER, Brahmin and *Babaji (Adhikari)* (whose social status is lower than that of the Brahmin priest.)
- (6) We accept Srijukta Dhaneswar Bhattacharya of Taluk Bhatibari of Pargana Katibari, P. S. Alipur Duar, Dt.

Jalpaiguri, as our preceptor. We shall obey him in all respects in religious matters and not otherwise.

Signatures of different
villagers.

2nd Magh, 1347 B. S.

Later on it was declared by Sri Dhaneswar Bhattacharya that fishing for one's own consumption was allowed, but not for selling. Any one violating this directive should be excommunicated, and must undergo ritual purification for re-entry into caste. Besides this playing on drums, a profession of the low caste Badiyar, has also been given up by the Rabhas.

On the previous day, before purification Sri Bhattacharya took with him three Brahmins and two BARBERS, belonging to the district of Kamrup in Assam, to Barasalbari ; for, the local Brahmins and BARBERS serving other castes did not venture to accept the Rabhas as their clients (*jajman*) for fear of losing their social position and their old clients as well.

However, with these priests and BARBERS, Sri Bhattacharya first purified the Rabhas of Barasalbari on the 28th of *Chaitra* (March-April), 1347, B.S. (1940). They were given the surname of Das. For their purification and for performance of *yajna* according to Hindu rites and accepting Hinduism they had to pay per head annas /17/-.

A meeting was held there under the presidentship of Sri Bhattacharya and it was resolved that*

In pursuance of the meeting held on Wednesday, the 2nd. *Magh*, 1347 B. S., we have become purified this day by a Brahmin in the presence of the gentlemen who have signed below. The signatures of the gentlemen present are overleaf and our castemen who have put in their signatures below have promised to be purified very soon like ourselves. In pursuance of their promise we have become purified today.'

1347 B. S.—28th *Chaitra*, Friday
Priests :

- Sd./ 1. Sri Lalit Chandra Deb Sarma
2. Sri Hari Nath Deb Sarma
3. Sri Baneswar Bhagabati

Barber :

- Sd./ 1. Sri Siddhiram Sil
2. Sri Chanaram Sil

* Here a literal translation from the original Bengali handwritten manuscript is given.

After the purification in Barasalbari the Rabhas of Kamakshyaguri were also purified in the same way on the 18th of *Jaistha* (April-May), 1348 B. S. (1941). A meeting was also held in Kamakshyaguri and it was resolved that*

1. In accordance with the decision of the meeting held on the 2nd Magh, 1347 B. S. in Bachamari (Barasalbari), we the inhabitants of Kamakshyaguri (whose signatures are given below) have become purified today. From this day onward we shall perform rites and ceremonies as the Sudras of the Hindu community do. We shall perform all the spiritual, ancestral, and other rites and ceremonies of the Hindus. If we do otherwise, we shall have to do penance and undergo fresh purification.

2. We agree that we shall perform all our future rites and ceremonies with the help of two priests (a) Srijukta Lalit Chandra Deb Sarma and (b) Srijukta Harinath Deb Sarma, who are present at the time of purification.

3. We shall be purified by Srijukta Dhaneswar Bhattacharya of Chatibari village. We accept him as our religious preceptor. All religious observances will be performed according to his instruction.

18th *Jaistha*, 1348, B. S. (1st June 1941)

Sri Dhaneswar Bhattacharya

Sri Baneswar Bhagabati

Written by :

Sri Rudra Singh (Mech)

Later on, gradually, the Rabhas of other villages also were purified in the same way one after another within two months.

Then to consolidate their position and for the well-being of the newly formed Rabha community, the inhabitants of Barasalbari held a meeting to organize a Hindu Sabha (Association) and it was resolved that* :

We, the inhabitants of Barasalbari, sub-division Tufan-

* A literal translation from the original Bengali handwritten manuscript is given.

i Due to shortage of the long list of signatures is not incorporated here. Amongst the signatories some of the Rajbanshis and Kshatriyas are also there to give their consent of accepting the Ravas within Hindu fold.

ganj, Dt. Cooch Behar, have formed a Hindu Sabha (Association).

Name of members present : §

Sri Bhajan Sing Das is unanimously elected as the President of our newly formed Association.

The following fourteen persons are unanimously elected as members for the welfare of the newly formed Hindu Sabha of our village. They are :

1. Sri Bholanath Das
2. „ Nanda Das
3. „ Gopi Das
4. „ German Das
5. „ Balai Das
6. „ Bistiram Das
7. „ Matia Das
8. „ Mandal Das
9. „ Hadda Das
10. „ Jaduram Das
11. „ Dhutnarayan Das
12. „ Kangam Das
13. „ Chanteswar Das
14. „ Lakshyanath Das

We, the undersigned members, have organized a meeting for election of the Secretary.

Sri Bholanath Das is elected Secretary in the meeting.

The activities of the Association are :

1. Collection of weekly dole, known as *musti-viksha* (a system by which each family keeps apart a handful of rice from its daily requirements for seven days to contribute to an organization).

2. Weekly chanting of the glory of the Lord Hari (*nam-sankirtan*) in the temple (*Hari Sabha* or *Hari-bari*).

3. Observing the yearly *pujas* (worship) and ceremonies of the Hindus.

4. Welfare and improvement of the society (*samaj*).

5. Prohibition of drinking liquor.

* Literal translation of the original Bengali manuscript is given here.

§ There are fifty-six names, all are Rabhas.

The following gentlemen will collect *musti-bhiksha* :

Sarvasri Chanteswar Das, Jaduram Das, Nanda Das, Laksha Nath Das will deposit the same with Sri Bisturam Das.

Sri Balai Das and Sri Bisturam Das will repair the *Hari-bari* (temple of the Lord Hari).

Sri Matia Das will light lamp in *Hari-bari* every day.

We, the remaining members, will try, as far as practicable, for the well being of the *Hari-bari* and the village.

4th *Sravan* (June-July), 1349 B. S.

Written by

Sri Dhaneswar Bhattacharya

President :

Bhajan Singh Das

Secretary :

Bholanath Das

Members :

Following the initiative of Sri Dhaneswar Bhattacharya for upgrading the Rabhas, some of the well-to-do Rajbanshi clients (*jajmans*) left him as their priest and he was put to much economic difficulty for about two years. The Rajbanshis who were already claiming Kshatriya status did not like the Rabhas to become their equals and, secondly, they would suffer economic loss. For, it was customary in the region, that the Rabhas reared fowl on behalf of the Rajbanshis who used to get their share from them. Now, if the Rabhas give up rearing fowl, according to their new agreement, the Rajbanshis would naturally suffer economic loss. But gradually the agitation raised by the local Rajbanshis subsided.

Although this social mobility movement started originally in one village, during the course of a few years it spread to other Rabha villages. There are still some Rabha families who have not purified themselves. Their concentration lies to the north-east of Kamakshaguri. Generally, marriage does not take place between these two groups of the Rabhas. In case of such a marriage between a Hindu and a non-Hindu, the old Rabha ritual is performed.

Some Recent Trends

1. Around 1947, one pleader, popularly known as Dhire Ukil (supposed to be Kshatriya by caste) of P. S. Tufanganj (Cooch Behar) advocated that any literate person could act as priest reciting incantations from *Purohit-darpana* (sacred book dealing with the procedure of ritual practices) and anybody could play a drum in his own village during the ceremonies. He tried to preach that taking the service of a Brahmin and a DRUMMER was a sheer waste of money. But the proposed reforms got a set-back after the death of the pleader.

2. In Parabasti (forest village under P. S. Kalchini, Dt. Jalpaiguri) some of the Rabhas had been converted into Janjogi religion by a religious preceptor from Nepal in 1958. According to this religion, Nature is the main object of worship ; there should be no idolatry ; society should be patrilineal and drinking liquor should be strictly prohibited. But after a year or so, *Koch-huji* (priest) and *Huji* (medicine-man) of the village took the initiative and succeeded in re-converting the Rabhas into their old tribal religion. It is due to the reason that if they followed the Janjogi religion, the *Huji* and *Koch-huji* would have no functions in the society and they would suffer economic loss. The villagers supported the move as they were severely addicted to drinking. Thus, within a few years, almost all returned to their old tribal religion.

3. Around 1957, the local Rajbanshis and the Kshatriyas were instigating the Rabhas to accept Kshatriya-ism and assured them that thereby they would be accepted in their society. But the Rabhas were not inclined to accept Kshatriya-ism right then till a large portion of the converted Rabhas become mentally 'pure' enough, though some of them had gone so far as to accept *guru* (preceptor), belonging to the Rajbanshi caste, and taken *diksha* (initiation for special religious meditation).

4. Since 1963, a few members of Satsanga (an Association of Sri Anukul Thakur) have been trying to enlist the Rabhas into their Association and have succeeded to some extent in doing so in some villages around Kamakshyaguri,

5. During 1961-62, the converted Rabhas again started rearing pigs and fowl supplied by the Government to supplement their income. Near Barasalbari, the Rabhas were in favour of reverting to their original tribal surname, i. e. 'Rabha' instead of 'Das' as adopted during their purification of 1347 B.S., so that they may get certain privileges reserved for scheduled tribes.

Conclusion

Even before their hinduization, the Rabhas of North Bengal were agriculturists and were taking the help other artisan castes for their subsistence. They had also incorporated a number of Hindu rituals without seeking recognition as a Hindu caste. They embraced Hinduism for no economic gain. Later on, through a number of social measures, they gave up rearing of pigs, fowl and selling fish, although it entailed considerable economic loss to them. The chief motivation behind the social mobility movement among the Rabhas may, therefore, be largely attributed to their aspiration for a higher social status in the regional hierarchy.

The essential feature is that, unlike the Rajbanshis of the region, they aspired for the status of a Sudra and not the Kshatriya. This may partly be explained as due to their poor level of land-holding. The other feature is that the local Hindus and the Rajbanshis opposed their entry into the Hindu fold for fear of economic loss, lest the Hindu Rabhas should refuse to rear pigs and fowl on their behalf.

The economic loss due to their giving up the particular vocation of rearing pigs and fowl could not be withstood by the Rabhas indefinitely only for the purpose of attaining social status. It is observed that during 1961-62 many of them relapsed to their original custom of rearing pigs and fowl.

Acknowledgment

The author is indebted to Dr. S. C. Sinha and Sri B. Mukherjee for their kind suggestions in preparing this paper.

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OCCUPATIONAL CHANGES IN A PRIESTLY CASTE OF MYSORE¹

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S. G. MORAB

(*Received on 28 July 1968*)

Abstract. In this note, an attempt has been made to describe the nature of change in the occupations of the priestly caste of Diksits of South India. The study covers 184 individuals spread over four generations.

THE Diksits are a Tamil-speaking Smartha Brahmin² engaged in priestly services in Sakta and Saiva temples located mostly in the southern part of the Mysore State. Though the earliest reference regarding the presence of the Brahmins in the State dates back as early as 3rd Century A. D. (Rao 1927, I : 281), the Diksits are comparatively new immigrants in this State. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century A. D., in most of the Saiva and Sakta shrines the Tammadis (non-Brahmin) used to officiate as priests. Afterwards, the kings of the Wadeyar dynasty felt the absence of *Agamic* rituals in the temples usually patronized by them, and the Diksits of Conjeevaram (Tamil Nadu) were invited to act as chief priests in their temples. In the following years, the Diksits considerably consolidated their position as chief priests in various temples, by replacing the former *Pujari* caste, and by a slow modification of their ritual practices. This was possible because of royal patronage, their knowledge of rituals prescribed in the Hindu scriptures and high caste status.

Problem and Method of Study

In this note an attempt has been made to describe the nature of change in the occupations of the Diksits and their

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spread in the region as observed through the genealogies of seven individuals of Mysore city.

In the genealogies, the informants, who were in the age-group of 40.50, were requested to furnish the occupations and the places of work of all their male relatives whom they could remember. The data were then processed to weed out repetition. The total number of persons, including dead, covered in this study is 184. They are spread over four generations—one below and two generations above the informants. The main results of the study are presented in Table 1 and 2.

TABLE 1

Generation-wise distribution of occupations

Sl. No.	Occupation	Generation				Total	Percentage of the total
		Ascending more than one	Ascending one	Informants' generation	Descending generation		
1.	Priests	17	39	42	15	113	61.42
2.	Business	—	4	8	6	18	9.80
3.	Teaching services	1	5	6	4	16	8.69
4.	Clerical services (Govt./semi-Govt.)	—	5	5	12	22	11.96
5.	Private service	—	1	3	3	7	3.80
6.	Engineering	—	—	3	—	3	1.63
7.	Lawyer	—	—	1	—	1	0.54
8.	Artist	—	1	1	—	2	1.08
9.	No information	—	1	—	1	2	1.08
	Total	18	56	69	41	184	

TABLE 2

District-wise and generation-wise distribution of priests

State	District	Number of temples	Generations				Total
			Ascending more than one	Ascending one	Informants' generations	Descending generation	
Mysore	Mysore	15	6	23	26	12	67
	Mandya	2	2	1	2	—	5
	Bangalore	7	1	4	6	1	12
	Kolar	4	1	3	4	1	9
Madras	Chingleput	1	—	—	1	1	2
	North Arcot	1	—	—	1	—	1
Total		30	10	31	40	16	96
No information on the names of temples and places		—	7	8	2	—	17
Grand Total		30	17	32	42	15	1 13

Discussion

(a) **Pattern of change :** Table 1 clearly shows that majority of the Diksits cling to their traditional occupation of priesthood. They are proud of their vocation. However, the tendency regarding the adoption of other occupations is largely evident from the figures of the present and descending generations of the informants. There is nothing very special about this inclination. The shift is usually towards white-collar jobs. The interesting point is that the change, as observed by us, is not haphazard. Table 1 shows that the Diksits, when they have to change, pursue only those occupations which do not affect their ritual status. When the

informants themselves were asked to explain the reasons for this tendency, they adduced the following :—

- (a) no change in the scale of pay in temple services,
- (b) absence of land and other grants,
- (c) few new temples are being built and
- (d) better educational facilities which lead to increased possibility of securing new types of jobs.

They also added that, because of these factors, it is not likely that in future the Diksits would remain confined to their traditional occupation. However, it is significant to note that till now no caste has yet replaced them from their traditional occupation anywhere in southern Mysore. Our observations on the subject lead us to point out that the opposite tendency is particularly more widespread.

(b) Spread and nature of hold on traditional occupation :
 Spread and nature of hold on traditional occupation :
 As already stated, the Diksits were immigrants to the State of Mysore from the Tamil country. But the kindred of the Diksits of Mysore city are highly localized. The spatial distribution of occupations (Table 2) shows that their kin work mostly in the southern districts of Mysore State, namely, Mysore, Mandya, Bangalore and Kolar. The genealogies of the seven families show that their maximum concentration is in the Mysore district itself. They are associated with the duties of temple-priests in the fifteen most important and major Saiva and Sakta temples of the district, out of which five are situated in the city of Mysore itself. This concentration in these specialized jobs of priestcraft, through the network of kin ties, in the major temples in Mysore district, which are under the administration of either the Government of Mysore or Mysore Palace, coupled with their knowledge of the subject, placed them in a commanding position over the former priests, namely, Tammadi. This has also consequently brought in a change from the earlier modes of worship, the sanskritic rituals have come more into relief in many of the Saiva and Sakta temples. However, in many temples the

presence of the people of the Tammadi caste as temple functionaries, under the supervision of the Diksits, and rituals other than purely sanskritic, continues.

NOTES

1. The data were collected during the course of an earlier (1967) study approved by the Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India.

2. According to some, the Diksits are considered inferior to Tamil Smartha Vadama and other Brahmin subcastes in the Mysore region. Some describe them as 'Siva Nambiga,' who are considered as inferior in the sub-caste hierarchy ; and members of other Brahmin sub-castes in Mysore refrain from accepting even the sacred water (*Teertha*) from their hands. Rao writers, 'The Sivadvija or Sivanambi and Jamballa are of the Smartha sect and officiate in Siva temples' (1927 : 1 : 226).

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MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

I beg to point out a few doubts regarding the paper 'Conversion to Christianity' by Ch. P. K. Mohapatra and J. Swain in *Man in India*, Volume 49, No. 3. I shall be grateful, if you kindly publish this in your esteemed journal, or take it into consideration otherwise as you deem fit.

The authors have taken up the study of Lanjia Saoras of Pottasingi. The hypothesis was that Christianity brings an all-round progress to the tribals. This hypothesis is struck by certain inherent deficiencies because no study among any tribe in India has so far indicated that economic prosperity, educational development, wider knowledge and participation in local as well as national politics are interconnected with conversion to Christianity. Therefore, these indicators the broad based and general criteria of progress not only concomitant to conversion.

Forty individuals were selected from the converts and non-converts from 9 villages. It has not been shown whether these 40 adults were male or female, their age and whether they had visited tea-gardens or not, and above all if they have contact with various other places beyond the Saora Hills. These determinants are important from the point of view of the situation in the Saora Hills. Change agents like tea-gardens, Block activities and other development activities are notable in this context. The sample number being very low, attitude of respondents would vary according to age and sex.

The calculation of chi-square in each of the 4 headings has been arrived at by adopting a mathematical formula which was adopted in a more general way perhaps to fit into the conclusion. I am afraid Null-hypothesis of independence has not been properly understood by the authors in the present situation. As a result the general conclusion derived from the analysis is subject to dispute.

As a student of Saora life for the last 12 years, I could point out that conversion to Christianity among the Lanjia

Saora of Pottasingi, P. S. Gunpur, in Koraput district may be more recent than in Parlakhimedi area where a mission centre was established at Serongo by E. C. M. Munro as back as 1919. Saoras sent to tea-gardens were also converted to Christianity. Hence there are first-generation converts as well as second-generation converts. Economic, social, educational and political criteria of progress may be determinable in case of converted Saoras as conversion helps them to give up large number of sacrifices to ancestors, gods and spirits which are a perpetual drain and make them heavily indebted. There are data to show that Saora converts have certainly improved their economic material possession and even educational and political standards. Thus a careful and painstaking study would clearly reveal that the conclusion arrived at by the authors by taking into account 40 converts only from the area is a sweeping generalization with dubious accuracy.

Bhubaneswar

Nityananda Das

30 October 1969

BOOK REVIEWS

Urgent Research in Social Anthropology ; Proceedings of a Conference. Edited by Behari L. Abbi and Satish Saberwal. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rastrapati Nivas, Simla-5. 1969. Pp. 235. Rs. 30.00/ \$11.00/70s.

The Tenth Seminar of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study was held on the subject of Urgent Research in Social Anthropology on July 15-20, 1968. The present volume of the Institute's *Transactions* contains the introductory speech of the Director, Professor Niharranjan Ray ; all the papers presented at the conference, and a detailed report of the discussions which took place, along with a valuable introduction furnished by the present editors.

Each author has tried to cover particular regions of India with which he is personally familiar, or has indicated particular problems which, in his opinion, call for urgent investigation. At the end are presented a number of resolutions and recommendations unanimously adopted by the participants.

The Director of the Institute deserves our congratulations for having brought together social scientists from all parts of India for such an important conference, and also for making available its findings within a reasonably short time.

The book should find a place in the libraries of all Universities where Anthropology is taught, and also of research institutions where anthropological investigations of a 'pure' or 'applied' nature are carried on.

N. K. Bose

The Angami Nagas/with some notes on neighbouring tribes. By J. H. Hutton. Second edition. Published by direction of the Government of Nagaland. Oxford University Press, Bombay-1, 1969. Pp. xviii + 499. Rs. 40.

This is one of the classics of Indian ethnography ; and the Government of Nagaland should be congratulated for making J. H. Hutton's book once more available to the public. Hutton (1885-1968) completed this work in 1915 ; to which he added in 1966 eight pages of additional notes without interfering with the original text. Since that time, many changes have taken place in the area where

the Naga tribes live ; yet a tribe can hardly be understood unless a picture is also available as to how they lived, and what their institutions were like many decades ago. Thus, although the book takes us more than fifty years backwards, yet its academic value has been enhanced on that very account. It is for modern scholars to cover the same ground once more, and find out what changes have taken place in the last half-a-century among the Angamis, and also what are the causes which have brought about this change.

N. K. Bose

Anthropology and Archaeology/Essays in Commemoration of Verrier Elwin, 1902-64. Edited by M. C. Pradhan, R. D. Singh, P. K. Misra, D. B. Sastry. Oxford University Press, Apollo Bunder, Bombay 1, 1969. Pp. viii + 328 ; bibliography of Verrier Elwin ; index, 12 illustrations and portrait of Verrier Elwin.

The present volume contains articles by seventeen authors, covering various aspects of Social Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology. Among foreign contributors we find the names of Kathleen Gough, Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, Prince Peter, Norman Zide, Francis L. K. Hsu, while Indian scholars are represented among others by M. C. Pradhan, John V. Ferreira, Stephen Fuchs, R. D. Munda, D. Sen.

The articles cover a wide range of topics such as a study of social stratification, political movements, religion and ethics, separatism, polyandry, the value system of the Nagas, and so on. A critical assessment has also been made of Elwin's achievement as a professional anthropologist. It has been rightly said that he tried to develop a new line of applied anthropology which was designated by him as 'philanthropology'.

Two articles on archaeology are also of interest. One of these deals with chopping tools and the other with early village communities in a river basin in Rajasthan.

The debt of the indigenous population of India to Verrier Elwin is indeed great, although his impact upon professional anthropologists was not as high as it should have been.

N. K. Bose

Clean People and An Unclean Country. By N. R. Malkavi, Chairman, Scavenging Conditions Enquiry Committee, 1958 ; Chairman, Advisory Committee on Scavenging Conditions, 1962 ; Vice-President, All India

Harijan Sevak Sangh. Delhi. Servants of the People Society, Lajpat Bhawan, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-24, Second edition, March 1969. Pp. ii + 164. Re. 1.

Professor N. R. Malkani came in contact with Gandhiji in March 1917 ; and ever since that time has devoted himself to the upliftment of the castes who are tied up with the duty of sweeping and scavenging. The Ministry of Home Affairs appointed him as Chairman of two committees, when he turned out two excellent reports.

The present book contains a summary of Professor Malkani's findings, along with a number of excellent constructive suggestions as to how to bring about an end of the appalling conditions under which some of our fellow-citizens live. Besides this, he has also added some of his own observations, including a few delightful anecdotes from Gandhiji's life.

The book should prove to be of great help to all those who are interested in India's social system.

N. K. Bose

A Bunch of Tagore Poems : *Translated by Monika Verma. Published by Writer's Workshop, Calcutta, 1966. Pages 15. Rs. 6.*

The poems of Tagore have inspired translators for decades, some flattering and some shattering the original handiwork of the master artist. It is delightful to find yet another collection belonging undoubtedly to the former group.

A Bunch of Tagore Poems translated by Sm. Verma is not only a brilliant example of all that a good translation should be, but she has also succeeded in making each stand out as a beautiful poem, and not just a translation. There are places where the reader forgets completely that they are translated.

But now and again Sm. Verma has failed to keep up the mellifluous ease of her style. 'All the stars of the night are present deep in the vast glare of day' hardly expresses the subtle implications of 'Rater sab tarai achhe diner alor gabhire'.

Yet after all is said and done, it is an undeniable fact, as Sm. Verma herself admits, that it is almost an impossible task to adequately translate Tagore's genius and mastery of words. The fact that she has succeeded in conveying the true spirit of the original and a great deal of its subtlety, grace, beauty and magic is enough to mark it as a brilliant achievement.

Swapna Dutta

Culture & Change in India/The Barpali Experiment. By Thomas M. Fraser. Jr. The University of Massachusetts Press, Manson Hall, Amherst, Mass. 01002, U. S. Pp. xii + 460. \$ 10.00.

In 1952 the American Friends Service Committee launched a ten-year programme of village development in Orissa. The intention was to achieve this with the assistance of locally trained workers, who would be able to carry on the programme after the Western team left.

The fields covered were as follows: training village level workers, health workers and village mechanics; introducing better type of wells for safe drinking water, latrines of a sanitary type; training villagers in poultry-keeping, growing more vegetables in order to supplement their unbalanced diet; establishing co-operative societies among weavers and leather-workers, and, lastly, in developing clinics and health services.

The author of the book under review studied the Project carefully for two years from 1958 to 1960. He had also access to all the papers and files of the Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia, and what was available in Barpali itself. A rural life analyst, belonging to Orissa, was responsible for some important investigations while the work was going on.

All these have been used by the author for describing in detail the work carried on through ten years. There were successes and failures; and these have been described, their causes analysed, with fairness and objectivity.

The Western workers were frequently confronted by customs and traditions which belong to rural India. These created difficulties; prevented the development of local initiative in many complicated and unexpected ways. The reviewer's feeling has been that the reasons why rural India still depends upon its old productive organization were not merely due to several centuries of lack of initiative under foreign rule, but more due to a reliance upon a non-competitive hereditary guild system which had preserved life in rural India through centuries of political vicissitudes.

But the question of the *origin* of a resistance is not a very important one in the understanding of the fact of resistance to innovations.

The effort of the author is praiseworthy, and we recommend this beautifully produced book to all those who are interested in the advancement of rural India.

N. K. Bose

Paschimbanger Puja-parvan O Mela, Volume I (in Bengali). *Edited by Asok Mitra ; compilation by Arun Kumar Roy ; supervision by Sukumar Sinha. Manager of Publications, Government of India, Civil Lines, Delhi. 1969. Pp. 44 + 320. Rs. 9.50/22s. 2d./\$ 3.42.*

This excellent production of the Census Department contains a detailed description of the fairs and festivals of the districts of Malda, West Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling. The Investigator, Supervisor and Editor should all be congratulated for the production. Students of folk-lore, architecture and popular religion will be able to derive a mass of information from the publication.

We do hope that other volumes will follow, so that some aspects of Bengali rural life are covered and described before they are irretrievably lost.

N. K. Bose

Bengal Peasant Life/Folk-tales of Bengal/Recollections of My School-days. *By Lal Behari Day. Edited by Dr. Mahadevprasad Saha. Pp. xvi + 555 + 1 plate. Editions Indian, 59A, Shambazar Street, Calcutta-4. 1969. Rs. 40.00.*

Reverend Lal Behari Day was born in 1825 and died in 1894. He came from a poor middle-class family, had his education in the village school, and then in the General Assembly Institution in Calcutta. In 1843, he was converted to Christianity, and served as a Catechist and later on as a Pastor. Day was deeply interested in education, and eventually joined the services of the Government as a teacher in Berhampore and the Hooghly College, from where he retired in 1887. Day was also on the editorial staff of several journals, and the author of two splendid books on rural life in Bengal and on the tales current among the common folk of the places where he lived and served.

These were stormy times, when a sharp controversy raged between the conservatives and liberals, between those who tried to revive Oriental learning and those who held that progress lay in accepting the science and civilization of the West. Day's recollections of his school-days form a most authentic picture of the life of those times (i.e. the forties of the nineteenth century), and those who are interested in the story of culture-change in Bengal, will find in his account a truthful and penetrating account of the forces which swayed Bengal society in those days when the urban

influence of Calcutta began to exercise its deep influence on the villages in the countryside.

The Editor and the Publishers deserve our congratulations for the excellent work which they have done.

N. K. Bose

Les Memoires D'un Voyageur : Texte reconstitue' et annote' Par Louis Malleret. Paris-Ecole francaise d 'Extreme-Orient. 1968. Pp.132.

The memoires published here for the first time were written, or rather dictated and then revised by Pierre Poivre, a French traveller of the middle of the 18th century. Poivre's travelogue aims at strict accuracy and not only at the picturesque detail. He studied man under various climes, more than the milieus in which he found man. His travels took him to China, Indonesia, Siam, India, Mauritius and the African coastline and eventually as far as the Central American islands. The present volume contains only the first part of the original Ms, and ends with Poivre's description of some areas of South India.

Mr. Malleret presents here an annotated text of Poivre's memoires. The last fifty pages are a description of the culture and customs of the people in the Pondichery area and some other South Indian localities. A modern reader will evidently find many gaps in these reportings ; but many observations of Poivre are quite correct and can be checked for their accuracy even today.

F. E.

Trends of occupation pattern through generationns in rural areas of West Bengal. By A. K. Das. Calcutta : Government of West Bengal. 1968. Pp. 103.

The book under review is a carefully conducted study : the fruit of painstaking fieldwork and honest cataloguing. The author presents the results of his enquiry : a very considerable portion of the book consists of tables and detailed assessing of the results of his research work in the various districts of West Bengal.

Mr. Das' conclusion is that, though 'cultivation still holds the first rank position (excepting 24 Parganas) in occupational field', yet a definite decrease is noticeable, a shift that has become well nigh unavoidable for several reasons, in favour of day labour or other occupations. Due to the low rate of literacy in this area, this flight from cultivation does not lead to a higher economic level, rather to a descending level. This trend away from the land

is more especially noticeable among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The author suggests, as a remedy, a drive for imparting a more technically biased education in view of their becoming eventually 'skilled' labourers. Perhaps the Government of India could give a little more attention to this problem.

F. E.

Lexique Jarai : Francais-Vietnamien, par Pierre-Bernard Lafont. Paris : *Ecole francaise d'Extreme-Orient*. 1968. Pp. I-X ; 299.

The Jarai language or dialect is spoken in a relatively small area of S. Vietnam. It belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. Mr. Lafont composed a basic dictionary of the Jarai language spoken in the province of Flei Ku. The dictionary gives the translation of about 3000 French words, prefaced by an introduction to explain the system of phonetics followed and a few details of the Jarai syntax.

The dictionary runs to about 300 pages, printed in three columns : the 1st one giving the French words, the 2nd the Jarai translation, and the 3rd the Vietnamese equivalent.

F. E.

L'oeuvre De La Poetesse Vietnamienne Ho-xuan-huong. Textes, traduction et notes par Maurice Durand. Paris-Ecole francaise d'Extreme-Orient. 1968. Pp. 192.

The present collection of short poems by the Vietnamese lady poet Ho-Xuan-Huong is one of the several works which the late Maurice Durand left in a state of near completion. The Ecole francaise d'Extreme-Orient has prepared the photostatic publication of this interesting study on the poetry of Ho-Xuan-Huong.

An historical introduction supplies the necessary background information to understand the deep—often erotic—meaning of the poems. The author gives the text in the original, in Nom idiom, with the variants ; then a transcription and a tentative translation with critical notes on the text.

F. E.

Abhandlung und Berichte des Staatlichen Museum fur Volkerkunde Dresden. Berlin-Academie-Verlag. 1968. Pp. 196.

This 28th volume (annual) of the National Museum of Ethnology of Dresden contains a variety of articles ; among others : Three tales of the Yabim (N. E. Guinea), Archeological

finds along the upper course of the Tauri river (N. Guinea), Headrests of the Admiralty Islands, The technique of gilding among the Baule (Ivory Coast), New analyses of alloys used in Benin (W. Africa), Some remarks on clay figures of cattle from Dire Dawa (Ethiopia).

However, the first article will be of special interest to the Indian reader. In this essay Lydia Icke-Schwable studies 'The Horse in Mythology and cult-practices among Adivasi groups of Central India'. The author was struck by an apparent contradiction. These Adivasis in their mythology and customs seem to attach a great importance to the figure of the horse, and yet in their daily life they have no real connexion with this animal. From the relics of the Indus and Harappa civilizations where the horse is nowhere depicted, we may infer that in pre-Aryan times, the horse was unknown in the Indian subcontinent.

Among the Adivasi groups of Central India the following are mentioned in the essay : the Bhils and Bhilala of East Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh ; the Gonds, Bhumias, Kols, Kamars, Baigas and Muria Gonds of Madhya Pradesh ; the Ourans, Asurs and Gadabas of Chota-Nagpur, Bihar ; the Hos and Saoras of Bengal ; the Kuttia Kond and Maria Gond (Jhoria) in Orissa, as well as the Raj Gonds and Kolams of Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh. In their tales and legends these tribes mention the horse that for them is the symbol of wealth and power. Through their own fault they have been deprived of this luxury, now only reserved to gods, spirits and heroes. The Ourans know the pony that was the mount of Pat Raja, the Lord of Spirits and Diseases. The pony could be seen, but never its rider ! The Asurs of Ranchi have the same legend. Many Adivasi tribes fashion small clay horses which in cases of sickness and sterility they offer to the gods. In their funeral the Bhils use the symbol of the clay horse with rider, which is supposed to carry the dead to the other world.

From these and many other similar facts, the author draws certain conclusions : (1) Since the horse was unknown in pre-Aryan times, its appearance is likely connected with the Aryan invasions of India. (2) The extensive use of the figure of the horse in legend, religious ritual and customs among the Dravidian tribes is an established fact. These practices were probably borrowed from Hindu society at a very early stage. (3) The Munda-Kol groups, on

the other hand, reject the horse symbol. For them it belongs to the Hindu artisans and to the Dravidian tribes. The horse is looked upon as foreign to their own Munda-Kol culture. (4) The Dharma-cult contains elements which proceed from Adivasi culture as well as from various religious trends of the Hindu community. It offers a remarkable example of the fusion of distinctive cultural elements within Hindu society.

In conclusion I might mention that this volume contains some fifty pages of quite good photographs in connexion with some of the articles.

P. V. W.

Cultura Universitaria—Nos. 96-97.—1967. Pp. 232. Caracas (Venezuela).

This magazine is a publication of the Central University of Caracas. The articles in the present number deal with various cultural topics: humanism, music, language, poetry, theatre, biography, social questions. Generous space is given to book reviews. None of the contributions is very long, nor very deep. 'Cultura Universitaria' is calculated to stimulate university intellectual activity and keep it on a respectable level.

F. E.

Anthropos. Brno (Czechoslovakia).

This review is not to be confused with the well-known *Anthropos* published by the Anthropos Institute of Ethnology of Modling (near Vienna), Austria. The Brno *Anthropos* is of more modest dimensions, but on the other hand, seems to have a wider objective, dealing as it does with Anthropology, Paleo-Ethnology, Paleontology and Geology. It is beautifully printed and illustrated. Judging from the numbers that have come to hand it is written exclusively in German and Central-European languages.

F. E.

1. **A Preliminary Appraisal of the Scheduled Tribes of India.**
2. **Classification of Published Literature on the Scheduled Tribes of India.**

Both of these cyclostyled volumes published by the Office of the Registrar General of India, New Delhi, will be of assistance in the coming census operation of 1971. Tribal names have either changed from time to time, or the records of different authors have given

variable names for the same community. A work like the first typescript under review will thus be of great assistance to census officers as well as students of anthropology in general.

We are sure, those who notice any omissions or errors will co-operate by sending in their comments and corrections to the Registrar General's office in New Delhi.

N. K. Bose

Chitramaya Adivasi Rajasthan. By Narendra Vyas. Published by the Tribal Research Institute and Training Centre, Udaipur, 1969. Pp. 58. Price not mentioned.

This beautifully illustrated booklet, with its text in Hindi, gives us a pictorial representation of the social, religious, economic and everyday life of the scheduled tribes who inhabit Rajasthan. There are reproductions of photographs as well as of drawings by an artist. We hope that the book will become popular among those who are interested in tribal life.

N. K. Bose

Problems of Indian Nationalism. Nirmal Kumar Bose. Allied Publishers. On behalf of A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences, Patna—1. Rs. 4.50. 42 pages.

The three lectures printed in this monograph were originally delivered at the A. N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, in 1967. Their importance lies in the fact that they offer not only a diagnosis of but a remedy for our present condition. The author treats national unity under three heads, political, economic and cultural. Of these the first is a fact, but economic reforms have yet to reach the masses. Free India has had to face not only unequal social change in different parts of the country and among different sections of the people but also an unprecedented growth in population. As far as the cultural factor is concerned, diversity is something which a healthy economy should be able not only to contain but to welcome.

It becomes clear from the third chapter on the Hindu Muslim question that even when a man like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan introduced his community to western education the secular spirit which should have gone along with it was not adopted. The anomalous existence of Muslim personal law today is witness to this. The end of imperial rule in 1947 brought diverse classes to power in India and Pakistan, the 'masses' (as distinct from the

'classes') scarcely receiving a share. The dominance of politics in public life has continued ever since. The author reminds the reader of Gandhi's opposition to Partition and his desire for a final massive civil disobedience movement. Jinnah's speech before the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11, 1947 laid down a secular ideal for the new state. But it was an ideal hardly workable by those who had been fed on Islamic ideas. The author could have noted here that Congress policy over the Khilafat agitation encouraged extra-national allegiances, evidences of which are yet present in the Muslim consciousness today. However this part of the book throws much light on Indo-Pakistan differences by relating them to differences in social change among Muslims and non-Muslims.

As far as remedies are concerned a faster pace of modernization and growth of voluntary organizations which cut across caste and other barriers will help to combat provincialism, linguism and casteism. The best corrective for over-reliance on purely political measures is constructive work on Gandhian lines so that the participation of the masses in national life goes beyond the ritual of the five-yearly ballot. The precise content of this needs to be worked out in the context of our present-day needs. Among valuable insights that need to be taken note of is Professor Bose's point that a so-called national language is unlikely to cement the cracks in our system since even those who speak the same language do not always live peaceably. At least two new areas of future research are pin-pointed :—(1) the impact of the printing press on the life of nineteenth century Bengal ; (2) a state-wise analysis of social change with reference to economic and ideational factors. Finally, at a time when counsels of despair are prevalent, this well-written book is marked not only by objectivity (Cf. the sympathetic treatment of Jinnah) but is inspired by a constructive spirit.

Margaret Chatterjee

The Malavas. By Kalyan Kumar Das Gupta. Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series No. L. Published by The Principal Sanskrit College, 1 Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta 12. Pp. xviii + 36 + 4 plates. 1966. Rs. 7.00.

The author, who is a Lecturer in Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta, has followed up his study of the Audumbaras by the present study of the Malavas or the Malloi of classical accounts. It is a carefully produced essay in which all

available numismatic and literary references to the tribe have been critically examined, and a reconstruction offered about the warlike characteristics, economic and political affairs of the tribe, as well as of their history between the 4th century B. C. and 4th century A. D. In particulars, Dr. Das Gupta differs from the findings of scholars like Professor D. C. Sircar, and, we believe, he makes out his case with great cogency. We hope, further studies in the series will follow in course of time.

N. K. Bose

Bulletin De L'ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient. Tome IV. Pp. 314.
Paris : Ecole francaise d'Extreme Orient. 1969.

This yearly bulletin, as usual, brings us a variety of articles. The volume opens with the *in memoriam* notices on Charles Damais and Maurice Durand, specialists in Far-Eastern lore, who both died in 1966. Among the various articles I should like to mention the interesting study of Arion Rosn on an enigmatic 'Tirtha' or place of pilgrimage in the Deccan, described by medieval travellers, in particular by the Russian Athanase Nikitine, a merchant of Tver, in 1470, but the exact location of which is still a mystery. The author concludes that with all the historical data accumulated around this particular 'Tirtha', the problem does not seem to be nearer a definite solution. The hypotheses so far advanced are all found to be inconclusive and fragile. Madeleine Biardeau continues her study, begun in last year's bulletin, on some aspects of Hindu mythology. Professor Jean Filliozat writes about the most ancient Sanskrit inscription ever found in Indochina, sc. the inscription of 'Vo-Canh', so called after the place where it was discovered over 70 years ago. It is estimated that the inscription dates from the 2nd or 3rd century A. D. Unfortunately it was found in a badly mutilated condition, and this is one reason why scholars are not yet agreed as to its meaning. Prof. Filliozat opts for a Hindu tradition against earlier scholars who believed it be of Buddhist origin. Another article by Claude Jacques, treats of the same inscription, but is rather descriptive of the actual, badly damaged condition of the stele or slab on which the inscription was found. Accompanying photos illustrate these two articles. The book-review section occupies a sizeable portion of the bulletin, and is excellently done.

F. E.

Trances. By Stewart Wavell, Audrey Butt, Nina Epton. Pp. 253 with bibliography and index. 31 illustrations. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1965. 42s.

'Among the living today, we stand towards trance much as we stood in relation to electricity more than ninety years ago before Edison invented the electric light bulb.'

The book furnishes a revealing account of a wide range of trance practices and associated belief-systems of, among others, the Akawai. Indians, Temers, Malays, Chinese, Indians, Algerians, Sufi mystics, Balinese, Sumatrans and Japanese.

While, attempting to explain the mysteries of trance with 'a little' of physiology and psychoanalytical concepts, Wavell, the editor and inspirer of this interesting book, has rightly taken to task the metaphysicians and philosophers as well as the scientists—the former for telling us 'what the soul is *not* than what it is' and the latter for not 'accepting evidence which is subliminal and invisible rather than material'. But at the same time the book tells us only about the 'manifest content' of trance and leaves its 'latent content' almost in the dark. What is a trance? The authors have tried to answer this question through a shaman—partly with the help of an anthropologist, but would not successfully do so through a psychoanalyst or a specialist researching into the brain.

Butt's study of the Akawaio Indians is intensive and anthropologically oriented. Her account of a shaman's role training, personal qualities etc. is descriptive and vivid but except for advising us 'to keep an open mind, to observe each event and explain each symbol as it comes along' in a shaman's seance, and not to treat it as merely an illusion, hallucination or imagination, she unfortunately does not seem to take us beyond. Her impression that a shaman while diagnosing an illness, does not rely on physical symptoms but on the clues 'in the complex of social relationships of his patient or in the structural relationship of the group as a whole, though gets support from the viewpoint of socio-dynamics, suggests as if the process is consciously motivated and acted. But how can this be related to the concept of trance in which dissociation of mind takes place and the hypothalamus is taken over? One wonders how 'Intoxicated by tobacco...the shaman *must perceive* during his state of dissociation or trance, a

picture of the circumstances which may have created the condition of his patient' (*italics mine*). And on this basic point the authors seem to have remained almost at the point where their predecessors had left. The presumption that mind under trance works subconsciously within individual-cultural frame needs deeper probing.

Epton is a forceful writer and her account is very fascinating. She speaks with the faith of a believer who has personally experienced such parapsychological phenomena. She has engaged in the least speculative analysis and has probably contributed more to make *Trances*, 'a strangely disturbing' book.

Though attempts have been made to impose relevance in the arrangement of chapters it is hard to guess why the author-wise or subject-wise sequence was not followed !

With all this the book provides a mass of information on different varieties of trance.

S. C. Panchbhai

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